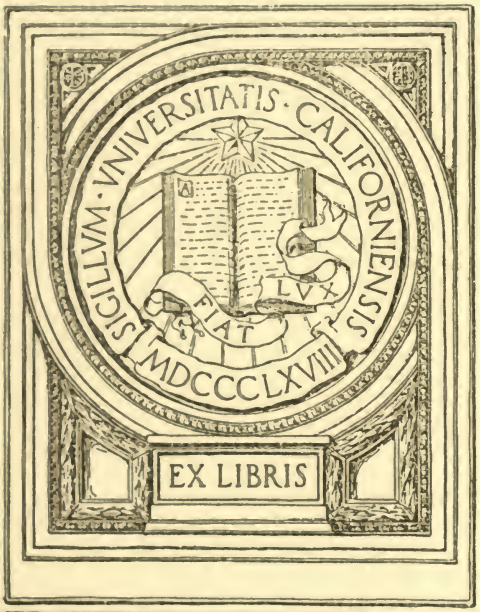
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THE MARGIN OF HESITATION

THE MARGIN OF HESITATION

BY

FRANK MOORE COLBY

Author of

"IMAGINARY OBLIGATIONS" and "CONSTRAINED ATTITUDES"

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THE MARGIN OF HESITATION

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TROLLEY-CARS AND DEMOCRATIC RAPTURES

If the appearance of the people on both sides of the car shakes your confidence in the future of democracy; if, while your eye travels along those two deadly parallels of blank-featured human latitude, you mutter to yourself, "Blood will tell, and after all class systems *are* necessary," and wonder what the world will come to when it is left to the plain people, such exceedingly plain people, for example, as those five awful ones nearest the door; and if you feel all your radicalism oozing out of you, including the initiative and referendum, recall of judges, short ballot, and proportionate taxation of swollen fortunes; and if, as six more of them get in each with a face like a boiled potato, you begin to distrust the whole foundation of popular rights, even trial by jury, even habeas corpus; if, I say, this sort of thing happens to you now and again, as no doubt it does, there is always an easy means of consolation.

Photographs of European royal families were published almost every week during the war, and can be obtained from the files of the newspaper supplements. Clip them and paste them properly and they will cure this phase of democratic melancholy. I have here a set of Hapsburgs whose faces if placed side by side would be as desolating as anything ever contemplated in the subway. Line a trolley-car with these Hohenzollern heads (without any helmets on them, naturally) and no one would suspect the presence of any person above the rank of gasfitter. He would merely suspect that the car was headed for the borough of the Bronx. Add to the rich supply of wooden visages in the various branches of these two families, all the pudgy, inane, commonplace, unpleasant, or commercial countenances possessed by the members of every other royal or ducal dynasty for the past century or two; place them in two rows with only the heads showing, and you will feel as you would feel on the way to Coney Island on a Sunday afternoon, except perhaps that you will miss the kingly features of the Long Island railroad conductor, or the royal bearing of his youthful heir apparent, the brakeman. My own collection of royal personages—and I have no reason to think the photographs inaccurate—makes every morning subway trip seem like a royal progress.

But though reconciled to the future of democracy, including that of the people in the subway, I cannot be sanguine about it. The pleasures of the advanced thinkers who assure me of it are denied me. I never have any luck in picking out the signs of the times. Even when I do succeed in catching up with an advanced thinker I never share that bright and early feeling. For example, I once got abreast of a man much admired in his day for mental forwardness. I forget his name, but recall that it was short and energetic, and suited to this Age of Steel—something like Chuggs, I think. He had been pent up as a young man in some college professorship, but had broken away and was lecturing on progress along all the principal railways of the country.

Professor Chuggs was one of those who assure us at short intervals that the present moment is the most egregious moment of the most egregious year of the most egregious century that "the world has ever seen," and that the next moment will be more egregious still. He wrote a good many of those articles before the war which declared that China is turning over in her sleep and that Persia is buzzing; that in the waste places of Africa five business men will soon be blooming where one blade of grass had grown before; that through the mighty arteries of commerce the life-

blood of civilization is coursing to the extremities of the earth; that already there is open plumbing in Patagonia and that steam drills are busy in Tibet. He used correctly all the terms employed in his business, including "giant strides."

His magazine, "The On-Rush," which was defined in a sub-title as "A Handbook of the Coming Cataclysm," announced as its policy the avoidance of conformity with "every bourgeois conception," which, in its application seemed simple enough; for the writers had merely to find out what a bourgeois conception was, and then take a flying leap away from it, no matter in what direction. It opened with a "Hymn to Moral Rapidity," of which one stanza ran, as I remember, something like this:

> One thought in the bush is worth two in the head,
> And a dogma's the clutch of the hand of the dead;
> So pull, pull away from the sands of Cathay,
> And forge to the forefront and strip for the fray.
> Up and off with your mind in the morning.

So it tossed systems of philosophy about like bean-bags, hit off each classic writer in a phrase careless but final, was on familiar joking terms with all the sciences, explained woman, silenced history summed up everything and everybody—the human race, the fathers of the church, genius, love, marriage, and the future state. In short,

each page was conscientiously prepared as a mustard-plaster to draw the blood to some unused portion of the reader's intellect.

Yet it had no such effect. On the contrary, one gathered from it nothing more specific or exciting than that materialism was an inadequate philosophy, that socialism was in the air, that there was corruption in politics, that education did not educate, and that marriage was a good deal of a bother. Apparently the editor and contributors had nerved themselves by battle songs into repeating these common remarks of the tea-table, all in a tone of desperate valor, as if hourly expecting each one of them to be their last.

I suppose there must be "new thinkers" in this country, and that they must sometimes come out on the news-stands. Yet a "new thinker," when studied closely, is merely a man who does not know what other people have thought. The "new thinker," if I may attempt a definition derived from my own unfortunate magazine readings, is a person who aspires to an eccentricity far beyond the limits of his nature. He is a fugitive from commonplace, but without the means of effecting his escape.

Not that I deny the approach of the social revolution. I merely say that since the social revolution will come about through the sort of people one ordinarily meets, it will not be par-

ticularly exciting. This extreme excitement of many social thinkers over the people one ordinarily meets has nothing to do with the nature of the people; it is a free gift of the temperament of the thinkers themselves.

Possessed of this light, gay, literary disposition they will often bubble over at the sight of persons and objects that leave almost everybody feeling rather spiritless. For example, an American social thinker, presumably a middle-aged person and living in one of the most prudent portions of New England, that is to say near Mount Tom in the state of Massachusetts, can become ecstatic at the bare thought of an American business man. According to him this business man "plays with the earth mightily," and "grasps the earth and the sky, like music." Railroads remind this social thinker of Heaven.

Life is no tangled web for him, nor is the world in the slightest degree unintelligible. War and wickedness and all that sort of thing used to trouble him a good deal, he says, but that was before he had really thought them out; now he feels quite comfortable about them. What is the use of "puttering," he says, "theorizing, historicizing, diplomatizing?" Get down to business and look humanity in the eye. People, he finds, are not so bad as they seem, and the only trouble with them is that living in a machine age they have got

caught in the machinery. The way out of it is easy. It is simply a matter of inspiring millionaire business men. "The inspired millionaire" surrounded by his "inspired or elated labor" will soon be filling the world with the "awful, beautiful resistless tread of the feet of the men of peace."

Now this may well be true. Nobody knows what might have happened already if Mr. Morgan, or the Rockefellers had had the advantages of Moses. Or take a simpler case. Suppose the president of the Boston and Maine railway passes a night alone with this social thinker on the cloud-capped summit of Mount Tom Massachusetts, and comes down the next morning with eyes aflame. He returns transfigured to his office and soon the inspiration runs all along the line, stockholders dancing and praising God, trains starting on time amid Hosannas, and the seven devils that are in every baggageman turned into swine and drowned. Sanctification of other lines soon follows, and there is no reason, assuming the divine nature of the guidance, why it should not spread rapidly throughout the world. There is no doubt that by inspiring millionaire business men sufficiently anything can be done. But for that matter inspiration and revelation could work wonders through almost anybody—through a labor leader as well as through a millionaire. Who knows,

for example, whether Samuel Gompers walking with the Lord might not have been just as efficacious as John Wanamaker on the island of Patmos? However, it is unreasonable to look too closely into this matter. The main point is the temperament of the writer. Exaltation can be had by him on easy terms.

On the other hand an equally talented British visitor on encountering the "average" American business man was recently excited in a directly opposite way, and yet almost as violently. The business man is always the same, says he, "from east to west, from north to south, everywhere, masterful, aggressive, unscrupulous, egotistic;" "a child with the muscles of a man;" "a predatory, unreflecting, naif, precociously accomplished brute." It is a rare man to whom as he travels about "everywhere" all business men will seem the same. It springs from a gift of nature.

Each of these writers ran on passionately in this manner for many pages, quivering, ejaculating, singing snatches of a psalm. They have "watered the desert," says the American admirer of business men, and "thought hundred year thoughts," and said, "Come" to empires and "Come" to the earth and sky. "Come, earth and sky, thou shalt praise God with us!" They are the "masters of methods and slaves of

things," says the British rhapsodist, and "therefore the conquerors of the world."

Such are the blessings of this buoyant temper. For us rather jaded and humdrum persons it is impossible to regard the coal man, much as we dislike him, as a tiger, or to feel toward the railway station as toward the Holy Sepulchre. We too crave that vision of the Boston and Maine railroad tipped up like Jacob's ladder with the shining forms of presidents, vice-presidents and directors, ascending and descending, accompanied by corporation counsel. And it would give a pleasant spice of danger to our daily visits to the green grocer, could we, like that other enthusiast, regard him as a jungle beast.

But that is the way with it. Some men are condemned from their nativity to matter of fact, while others, surmounting all the obstacles of variety, exception, and experience, can find a "type" or a "superman," for the looking. The term "business man," like the term "biped," or "homo sapiens," leaves us cold and a little abstracted, but in the writers of brisk little papers on enormous subjects, this, or any other large, loose, shapeless, social designation will often arouse the keenest personal feelings and implant the stoutest convictions. They can get gooseflesh, or even the assurance of apocalypse, from the mere contemplation of generic expressions which

convey no emotion whatever to any of the rest of us, except perhaps that of being a little at sea.

Finally another social thinker that I have recently encountered soars far away from the earthiness of these conceptions, far away from the earth itself, and looking down from this height on its misguided populations, thus addresses them: Begin all over again, he says. If the new charter of human rights does not re-create everything, it will create nothing at all. Make a clean sweep of all notions imposed from without; make a clean sweep of everything bequeathed to you. Away with God, church, king, priest, ruling class, the aristocrat, and the old-fashioned republican, the school as it now is, privilege of every sort, charities, inheritance rights, national frontiers, colonial power, and so on with much circumstance as to the range and depth of this damnation, but with no information as to the ways and means of doing the next thing that remains to be done after the damnation is achieved. For the next thing, he insists, is this: Be the people of peoples, and set up at once the universal republic, founded on equality and justice. And he is just as elated and just as sure that the thing will be readily accomplished, as if he had never traveled in a trolley car and never looked hard at the sort of Utopian ingredients that all trolley cars seem forever destined to contain.

THINKING IT THROUGH IN HASTE

Though often entranced by that brilliant group of cosmic problem-solvers—Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Bernard Shaw and others—I insist on my personal iresponsibility for the state of Mankind as a whole. These men are much too busy nursing civilization. They regard it as a sort of potted plant which they fear to find frost-bitten of a morning. This is especially clear in certain writings of Mr. H. G. Wells, in which he shows an impatient desire to tidy up the whole world at once. At one swoop he would remove the shirts from our clothes-lines and the errors from our minds. The world is too large for his feather duster; he had thought to find it a smaller planet that he might have kept at least half-way clean. Now see what he has on his hands—everything in a mess, Africa backward, China careless, the sex relation by no means straightened out, socialism, imperialism, industrialism, planless progressivism littering up things, a great war and its greater failure, and nobody caring a rap—at times it seems to his housewifely spirit almost too much for one person to manage. And then that infernal

human diversity—slow minds, stupid minds, minds made up too soon, or not at all, closed minds, tough minds, tender minds—what is to be done with them? He burns to do something.

In one of his books he describes himself in fancy as going about the country and, with the keenest pleasure, spearing all Anglican bishops. Though I am myself a stranger to the sport, I believe the pleasure of spearing bishops is exaggerated. For once begun it must lead logically to a daily drudgery of slaughter among the great crowds of folk who are not intellectually independent or morally daring—lead, in short, to the massacre of those who are not particularly exciting, a large task and tedious, owing to their quantity.

I wonder if we commonplace persons are not right after all in a certain instinct of distrust toward these gifted writers. We believe implicitly in their fancies and not at all in their facts. We believe in the world they have invented and not in the world they have observed; and we distrust them utterly as world-pushers. The signs are plain—terribly plain sometimes—that it is when they have the smallest notions that they say their largest things.

In common with other admirers of Mr. H. G. Wells, I am always charmed by him and his heroes when they are thinking things out and seeing things through, but I am profoundly disap-

pointed by the sort of thing they think themselves into. Mr. Max Beerbohm described the situation with perfect accuracy a few years ago when he represented a Wells hero, after a "lot of clear, steady, merciless thinking" about the muddle of the universe, as finding the solution in the "Provisional Government of England by Female Foundlings." I reproduce a passage of this most righteous parody, which is based, I think, on *The New Macchiavelli:*

True, there was Evesham. He had shown an exceedingly open mind about the whole thing. He had at once grasped the underlying principles, thrown out some amazingly luminous suggestions. Oh yes, Evesham was a statesman, right enough. But had even he really *believed* in the idea of a Provisional Government of England by Female Foundlings? * * * "You've got to pull yourself together, do you hear?" he said to himself. "You've got to do a lot of clear, steady, merciless thinking, now, to-night. You've got to persuade yourself that Foundlings or no Foundlings, this regeneration of mankind business may be set going—and by you."

This is not in the least unfair when you consider Mr. Wells's exultant discoveries during the last half dozen years or so, down to and including his recent discovery of God. Here are just a few of the problems and their solutions:

The future of America: This to his mind required instant settlement. It was absurd that

nobody should have a plan. They were letting America drift—that is what it amounted to—and he simply could not bear the thought of it. "Let America slide?" said he to himself on the way over. "Let a whole continent go to the dogs just for the lack of a little, clear, straight, beautiful thinking? I should be a coward if I shirked it." The solution came to him before he reached New York and was confirmed in a conversation a day or two afterwards. The idea, I think, was that we should all marry negro women, so far as there were enough of them to go around.

What is humanity as a whole doing? That was another question which everybody was dodging at the time out of sheer mental indolence. What is the nature of the world process? His hero thinks it out. His hero "takes high, sweeping views, as larks soar." He spends five years in South Africa, two years in Asia, six months in America, and sketches briefly civilization as it has pottered along in all those continents. "Pottered," that is the word for it. For what is civilization? What is it? Why, hang it all, it's a "mere flourish out of barbarism." What is Bombay? What is Calcutta? Mere "feverish pustules on the face of Hindustan." Something must be done about it. He thinks still harder and at length it flashes on him—the very thing—why had he not thought of it before—a plan at once simple and vast, a plan

that was immediately practicable, yet of enormous future potentialities, a plan——. Well, the plan was, I believe, the incorporation of an international book concern which should publish the best works in all languages, along with satisfactory translations.

Then there was the whole sloppy subject of the British Empire—King, army, colonies, Parliament, Church, education, *London Spectator,* and all that. A pretty mess they had made of it, and not a blessed soul paying the least attention to it; so another Wells hero had to think it out. "Why," said he, "the Empire and the monarchy and Lords and Commons and patriotism and social reform and all the rest of it is *silly, SILLY* beyond words," and the hero in his irritation flung himself right over into Labrador to think it out, and finally, after weeks of cold, hard, bitter, ruthless ratiocination, he cut down to the very roots of it, and he emerged from Labrador with a Plan. The plan consisted, I believe, in the publication of a book to be entitled *Limits of Language as a Means of Expression*—title subsequently changed to *From Realism to Reality.*

Another hero of lark-soaring mind is annoyed by the senseless refusal of almost everybody to shape his life in such a manner as will redound to the advantage of the beings who will people the earth a hundred thousand years from now.

A plan must be found. The thinking required is terrific, but he does not flinch, and at last he has it. It is the publication of a magazine called the *Blue Weekly,* whose motto is to be Love and Fine Thinking.

Meanwhile, aside from the sweeping of his heroes, Mr. Wells in his own name was doing some rather brisk chamber-work about the universe. He let in the light on the labor question, as one might open a blind. He shot his mind back to the twitching, thrusting protoplasm of the Carboniferous slime and he shot it forward to the final man, half-angel, who should stand on the earth as on a footstool and stretch his hand among the stars, and he delivered a lecture on that final man before some learned body. He gave a ship-shape account of the human race in twenty pages or so, seeing it through the ape-man stage, barbarism, and civilization, and well along toward the Great Solution, and then at the end put it all into a diagram, not too long for a busy man to carry in his pocketbook; it ran from complete savagery all the way to the great, harmonious, happy future state, and it was only about five inches long.

Some people complain that a Wells hero really does not think at all but merely explodes into fragments of periodical literature. I cannot see the force of this objection. Of course, Mr. Wells

is not, in the austere sense of the term, a thoughtful person, and he does not make his characters engage in any such dry, lonely, and unpopular process as thinking. If he did, they would be quite generally repulsive. But he does somehow contrive the illusion that a good deal is going on in their minds, and he makes them spit out between clenched teeth a platitude that you will often mistake for an astonishing idea. That is the measure of Mr. Wells's skill. The hero's mind does really sometimes seem to soar over the whole of civilization, when it is merely coquetting with last month's magazines.

Analyze the conversation in a Wells novel, and it will remind you sometimes of the cumulative index to periodical literature, and sometimes of the table of contents of a text-book on geology; but what other novelist could give you the impression that an index to periodicals was a fiery thing or that a geological title-list was almost passionate? I for one surrender instantly to the persuasiveness of Mr. H. G. Wells, and when the thoughts come red-hot from the hero's brain, they almost always warm me up, even though I have met them months before, cold and clammy, in some magazine. But then comes that awful moment of deflation, when the hero finally thinks things out—thinks things utterly down and out—gets what he is after—the great solution or the

great keynote, or the mighty mission that is proportionate to the mighty measure of his mind—and the solution is something like the Endowment of Maternity, and the keynote is, perhaps, God bless our home, and the mission is, for example, the chairmanship of an international commission for the promotion of poultry farming.

It is, of course, exorbitant to demand of Mr. Wells that the great idea when once attained shall come up to our expectations, but he might at least kill the hero off while still pursuing, and never let him bag the game. It is unsportsmanlike to start him off after the largest sort of scientific moose, and then have him end up by stealing somebody's magazine farmyard chickens. Something of this sort happens in a good many of his novels, and I believe it results from his too great preoccupation with the details of an unimaginable future state.

Out of an apparently impenetrable past, says Mr. Wells, science has reconstructed the megatherium, and he swears that the megatherium is every bit as real to him as any hippopotamus he has ever met. Why then is it not possible, he asks, that the same amount of scientific energy should ultimately evoke from an impenetrable future the creatures that shall succeed us on this earth? Nobody approaching science by way of Mr. Wells can deny this cheerful possibility. If, from the

past, science can produce a pre-horse or ëohippus, it may of course call up from the future an after-horse or hystero-hippus, if it has not already done so, and if, on looking back, it finds the ape-man or pithecanthrope, it might conceivably, on looking forward, chance on one of Mr. Wells's angel-men, which, in its mad desire to raise the devil with the English language, it would call either an angel-anthrope or an anthropangeloid. No one will dispute the point with Mr. Wells.

The only important point to the reader is what happens to Mr. Wells when he is too much preoccupied with these two extremes. However real the megatherium may seem to Mr. Wells, to him the hippopotamus for fiction's purpose is infinitely better company. The imagination can play around a hippopotamus but on a megatherium it can only toil. In the same way, owing to the lack of a generally understood social background, ape-men, cave men and the like are always failures in contemporary novels, and half-angels are worse still. Fiction cannot proceed in a social vacuum and the future space which a Wells hero thinks himself out into is, socially speaking, void.

That is why he comes back so empty-minded that he snatches at the first progressive-sounding magazine title he finds. It is unfortunate that a writer who can deal delightfully with actual human beings should think himself clean out of all

relation to them. In several of his books Mr. Wells is wholly concerned with the thinking out, not at all with the people who do the thinking. This is especially true of a certain story in which a bishop finds his way to God. It is not important that Mr. Wells does not make the bishop see God or that he does not make us see religion, but it is important that he does not make us even see the bishop. We do not mind our not arriving anywhere nearly so much as our not having any company on the way.

I confess, however, that when Mr. Wells is really eloquent about his Great Solution, no matter which one it may be, he is apt to have me under his thumb for hours. Suppose, for example, he should become very much excited about malted milk, and see in it a solution of every problem that now troubles society. I do not know whether Mr. Wells has as yet written a novel on malted milk, though he has championed other causes in his fiction that did not at first sight seem to me more promising. But I do know that if he should write a novel on malted milk, it would, for a while at least fairly sweep me off my feet. I should believe that malted milk, steadily consumed through the ages, on and on, would really produce that final perfect human race dreamt of by the hero of the narrative. It may be that for his wide and probably painful magazine readings he is

taking an ironical revenge and that these Great Solutions are only a sort of practical joke on his contemporaries. In that case, I have been often taken in.

The only excuse for thus singling out Mr. Wells is that he is in these respects representative. Vast numbers of contemporary humanitarian writers never rise above this level to which he sometimes descends. Moreover this body of writing which has obviously not taken the trouble even to catch up with the past is admired on the singular ground that it has overtaken the future. It is the journalism of prematurity.

It is the subject or the occasion of those breathless articles on the "modern spirit" and the way we speed along; on the revolutions of taste within a decade; on the terrific onward modern plunges of the novelist of last week; all written by excitable commentators who exclaim with astonishment and sometimes alarm at the contemporaneousness of their contemporaries.

But it is well known that these audacities and modernities in no wise account for the hold of a book on the attention. Thoughts just as bold and newly dated have often put us fast asleep. In books it is not the progress that is exciting, it is the person you are progressing with. There is not a day without its prosy iconoclasms, when some of the dullest people ever known will blaze

away at God, government, the family, and the moral sense with the most violent intentions and the drowsiest results. When the ideas are all about us in the air there does not seem any great audacity in presenting them. It seems rather like calmly blowing back our own breath into our faces. "Modernity" is an accidental quality of the books to which I have referred, having no more to do with their essential worth than has the day of the month on which they were printed. Because everything is swept away that preceded the date of publication, and to-day's superstitions are substituted for yesterday's superstitions, and because there is an unaccountable tendency to deify the middle of next week, which is not a very interesting object of worship, it does not follow in the least that it is a modern book. It does not even follow that it is in any essential sense a book at all. Literature does not stay behind with progress; it moves along with experience.

THE LANGUAGE OF FEMINIST DEBATE

I do not agree with certain representatives of Roman Catholic opinion that the modern sociologist does more harm than good. I would not burn a modern sociologist or even abolish him, if I could. Considering him as an indefatigable rodent burrowing among the roots of social complexities that he cannot understand, I rather admire him, but when he comes to the surface too soon, as he often does, and proclaims enormous certitudes as to the soul of this nation or that, and as to the direction that human society is bound to take, I should like to get him back into his hole again. And I question the value of a great many of his biological and evolutionary analogies. Take the man who some years ago reached the conclusion after the most violent sociological endeavors that the average politician was something of an ass. Why need he have fought his way to such a simple consummation, when he might so easily have jumped to it? Not that he said in so many words, politicians are asses. He put it sociologically. Party cries and iterative watchwords, said he, biologically, psychologically, and sociologically

regarded, are modes of appeal to the instincts of the herd, inherited from remote, probably prehistoric, zoological ancestors. But when you analyze this it comes to nothing more than saying that politicians are like the prehistoric ass, which adds little to our knowledge, and even as a term of abuse is not much more effective.

"The scarlet paint and wolf-skin headdress of a warrior, or the dragon mark of a medicine man, appeal, like the smile of a modern candidate, directly to our instinctive nature."

I see no value in this discovery. Had sociology never been invented I should have known that the dragon-mark of a medicine man was even more primitive in its appeal than the smiles of comparatively ancient types of presidential candidates.

Laughter, he went on in his strange thoughtfulness, laughter occurs sometimes in political life, but sociologically considered it is "comparatively unimportant." Nevertheless let us consider it biogenetically:

"It may have been evolved because an animal which suffered a slight spasm in the presence of the unexpected was more likely to be on its guard against its enemies, or it may have been the merely accidental result of some fact in our nervous organization which was otherwise useful."

Why all these sociological hypotheses of laugh-

ter? My own hypothesis is just as good: Laughter, I contend, is nothing more than an attenuated hiccough, pleasurably reminiscent of the excesses of our ancestors. Sociologists can never let laughter alone, though you would think it was the last thing they would want to bother with. There was one of them the other day who after a patient study of Aristotle's Portico, Bergson on Laughter, Bain on the Emotions and the Will, Kuno Fischer in "Ueber den Witz," Cicero on Oratory, Stanley Hall on "The Psychology of Tickling, Laughter, and the Comic" and some twenty other authorities, came to the conclusion that "Laughter at any rate is highly relaxing," but as this seemed a little too informal, he hastened to express it as a "pyschogenetic law." "Laughter," said he, "is one of the means which nature has provided to preserve psychic equilibrium and prevent more serious outbreaks." In its former state no one would have noticed this remark, and now it has become a sociological law, highly prized, I believe, in serious quarters. One never can tell the sociological possibility of some little thing that seems hardly worth the saying. Thus if you say, he swears like a pirate, you are not sociological. But suppose you pull yourself together and say: Profanity in that it relaxes the inner tension by a sudden nervous discharge and offers a means of escape from social inhibitions, is, when phylo-

genetically considered, nature's method under the conditions of modern civilized life of providing an outlet for primitive emotions which in an earlier period were apt to take more socially injurious forms, such as piracy. You will then be taken for a sociologist. I do not say you will really be a sociologist, but you will look like one, especially if you add a bibliography.

Sociology, as I have lately seen it streaming from the press, seems to consist of two main varieties. There is the sort above mentioned that tells in a strange language what everybody knows already. You recognize your own thoughts, though terribly disfigured. Then there is the full-winged or apocalyptic kind that tells you what nobody ever could know. This is the sort that sweeps the heroes of Mr. H. G. Wells off to Labrador or India in order to think out civilization, and that propelled an excellent French sociologist, during the war, straight through the soul of the entire German people.

But I am here concerned especially with the effect of social studies upon the language of feminist controversy. I recall, for example, a solid treatise greatly admired in its day, written by a German woman of enormous industry. Toward nonsense in all its forms she maintained an attitude of extraordinary seriousness. She did not even call it nonsense, but enveloped it in scientific-sound-

ing terms that made it seem quite dignified. Let Michelet remark in a thoughtless moment, "You must create your wife—it is her own wish," and she straightway defined it as a "subjective erotic fantasy." Some of the simplest and most familiar types of men disappeared beneath her Greek derivatives. For example, there was he who swaggers a good deal in his own household and is "tame and feeble" everywhere else—he who for all ordinary purposes might with perfect adequacy be termed a silly sort of man. This simple definition by no means contented her. She said he "experiences a dyscrasy," and that "between his sexual life and his career as a citizen there exists a latent contradiction which secretly is, perhaps, as great a trial to him as to the wife who is dependent on him." A licentious, domineering man, a weak, passive, crafty, false, or ludicrous woman, is an *acratic* person—that is to say, a "partially developed being whose whole personality is determined by teleological sex characteristics." They are exponents of "centrifugal sexuality." On the other hand, persons like the Christian saints are *iliastric,* "the highest type of centripetal sexuality." Better still are the *synthetic* folk whose sexuality is an equilibrium of the centrifugal and the centripetal sexual tendency. She seemed to have caught some bad verbal habit from almost every science she had studied, but she had no

doubt suffered the most from sociology. Take, for example, the simple and familiar precept that women should advance in morality and intelligence so far as possible without shattering the outward decencies. What mind uncorrupted by the social sciences would conceal it under this?

To emancipate oneself from the ethical normative of femininity, which fetters individuality because of the teleological limits of sex, is a distinct right. But to preserve its formal quality is the task of a free personality.

There was one good result, however, from her excessive industry. She did some excellent destructive work on the subject of Woman in General. Many pages of her arguments may be summed up in the single and apparently sound thesis that Woman, with a capital letter, is a myth, and that only women are realities. After a careful study of men's general statements about Woman she concluded that Woman is merely a "subjective fetish of sex," having no existence outside the brain of the thinker. She made the following collection of the foolish and contradictory remarks of the thinkers: There is Lotze saying that "the female hates analysis" and therefore cannot distinguish the true from the false. There is Lafitte saying that "the female prefers analysis." There is Kingsley calling her "the only true missionary of civilization," and Pope calling

her a rake at heart; Havelock Ellis saying that she cannot work under pressure, and Von Horn saying that in the fulfilling of heavy requirements she puts a man to shame; M. de Lambert that she plays with love; Krafft-Ebing that her heart is toward monogamy; Brissac that "souls have no sex," Feuerbach that they have; Laura Marholm that "the significance of woman is man," Frau Andreas Salomé that woman is one "who endeavors to realize an ever broader, ever richer unfolding of her innate self;" Havelock Ellis that nervous irritability has ever been her peculiar characteristic; Möbius that women are "strongly conservative and hate all innovation;" Hippel that "the spirit of revolution broods over the female sex;" Lecky that woman is superior both in instinctive virtues and in those which arise from a sense of duty; Lombroso that there is "a half-criminaloid being even in the normal woman;" Bachhofer that "Law is innate in women;" and von Hartmann that the whole sex is unjust and unfair.

This seems a fair illustration of the condition of men when they write about Woman. In contemporary writings their state is even worse. In reading all the little papers on this giant theme I have often wondered what it is that so balloons Man's thoughts of Woman just when he is about to print an article and at no other time—the sort

of man who could not fathom a single concrete personality. Why this mad rush of certainties with Man and Woman and Marriage and Society and God and Cosmos crammed into nutshells and all dispatched in about five thousand words. By what apocolocyntosis or pumpkin-change should the head of a journalistic comprise of a sudden a "Female Cosmos" merely because he wants to write an article? By what miraculous distention was an entire Superwoman squeezed into the tight, three-cornered intellect of Mr. Bernard Shaw? For some of the most charming writers of our day seem subject to this strange inflation. Woman, the Female Cosmos, "vast, broad, universal, and liberal; "Woman, the Superwoman, "ever pursuing Man at the behest of the Life Force"—what in the world is any middle-sized intellect to do about her? One thing is certain: There is no possible chance of disproving anything that the light literary character who invents her may have chosen to lay at her door. Refutation in this airy region is impracticable. Yet no matter how frivolous the writer may be, some feminist attempts the refutation.

A few years ago, for example, some harmless professor of biology let his mind sweep from the feminine germ cell all the way down to Mrs. Pankhurst, and filled a page of a Sunday newspaper with guesses as to Woman's place in nature, in

human history, and throughout all future time. For aught a finite mind could tell, they may have been good guesses, but it is not likely that even the professor himself had any deep conviction that in so large and blank a matter he was guessing right; he was thinking rather of filling that page of the newspaper. Yet his words were taken seriously at the time, and several women writers are even now rebuking him for his "views," though I am sure he was guiltless of holding any. Nobody has any "views" on the subject of Woman. When a man begins a sentence with the word "Woman" you may at all times, everywhere, blame him for the beginning, but you have no right to quarrel with any way in which he may choose to let it end. Yet to these careless, large assertions women retort seriously, even bitterly, and will often toil with might and main at their refutation.

Once, for example, the woman suffragists throughout this country, stung by the taunt that they had lost the cunning art of domesticity, plunged into the wildest household activities. For weeks they sewed things by hand, boiled them, and put them up in jars, and when they were finished threw them all into a public building in New York City and dared the world to come and see. It was to show that despite their strength of mind they had not lost their womanhood—in

reply to some magazine article whose writer had long since forgotten what he said.

And there was one point especially on which all argument was thrown away. There was no use in trying to reason a hominist out of his professional timidity. When he said, as his wont was, at short intervals, that he feared the neglect of home and husband if women voted, it would have been wiser to take no notice. Whenever the hominist quoted his St. Paul and cited those cherished examples from history—Penelope, Griselda, Ruth, Boaz, and the bride of Peter the Pumpkin-eater—there was always a retaliatory article instancing powerful and public-spirited women of to-day who in spite of everything had retained their womanhood.

This very laborious repartee was unnecessary. The husband marooned in a kitchen with his wife off voting all day long, was not an image that haunted us greatly in our daily lives, vivid as it seemed in the pages of certain essayists. Taking American husbands as they were this was never a natural anxiety. The chief task of the woman suffragists in this country was to prove that women had interest enough in politics, not to allay the fear that they might have too much.

Times have changed, and politics may now be discussed even at the womanly woman's hearthstone, but it ought always to be remembered that

we owe to the advancing woman, terrible as she was, this emancipation of the American male. It was not the rule in the American household that the man repressed the woman's political aspirations; on the contrary he generally encountered the sternest feminine opposition to any full expression of his own.

For a long period there were few American husbands who in their own families dared to be as political as they wished. Looking back on that grim domestic tyranny of the cold shoulder and the absent mind, the yawn, the interruption, the glazing eye, the sudden vanishings in the midst of sentences really eloquent, who can picture the American man as trying to keep women from getting into politics? They were all so obviously trying to keep politics from getting out of him.

This practical side of the matter was once summed up by a friend whose point of view rather appealed to me. "In regard to woman," said he, "I have no sympathy whatever with anti-feminist fears of the neglect of the family. If, with the march of mechanical improvement, housekeeping grows easier, what is to be done with the released housekeeping force? Turn it back, say the anti-feminists to the expanding woman, and housekeep more fiercely. Let that great managing talent which once ranged from corn-field to nursery, rocked the cradle, smoked the ham, reaped, spun,

milk, stewed, chopped, and sewed up everybody, wreak itself on one man, two children, five rooms, and a bath.

"Think of the households in which domesticity boils in its too narrow channel with a disproportionate force, the souls which go out into wall-paper, the excesses of conjugal scrutiny and child-care, the surplus anxieties, the many needless strenuosities of wedded life. An active-minded married woman in these days without outlet is bound to overdo her marriage. Suppose you married a very efficient person, and the only object of that efficiency were *you*. Take a woman of marked executive, though latent, ability—a woman who might have been Zenobia if she had had the chance. Would you, in a small suburban home, care to be Zenobia's Palmyra? Anti-feminists including a large body of sentimental epigrammatists have had much to say of the home as woman's kingdom and the sanctity of woman's sphere. But would any one of them wish to be a woman's sphere? Husbands of able but old-fashioned wives are worn to the bone by their wives' unduly limited activities. They would gladly see their feminine forces dissipated."

"The main danger, as I see it," he went on, "is that they will not be sufficiently dissipated. I am afraid of the great pressure of released mother-power upon purely personal affairs. In the politi-

cal domain, if anyone tells me that women, now that they have the ballot, will vote more foolishly than men, I can reply tranquilly that that is incredible. In the economic domain, if anyone tells me that the average woman is not fit for the large responsibilities of business enterprise, I can reflect comfortably that there is nothing whatever in the modern world to show that the average man is, either. In both of these fields moreover, the great feminine innovation is already so well along that nobody will be startled much by the further steps that it will take. But when it comes to the personal domain, my mind is less adequately prepared, and in some respects unreconciled. There is a hard reasonableness about women in all matters that pertain to health and ruthless hygiene is pretty sure to sweep over the community in the long run if their will prevails. Owing to certain dispositions into the details of which it is not now necessary to enter the duties of motherhood under the new régime will be considerably reduced. Great quantities of mother-power thus released will be poured into the public life where it will take the form of health control, minute, inquisitorial and all-embracing."

"A single woman can often make a man uncomfortable by the application of her cool reason to his irregularities in food, drink, underclothing, getting up and going to bed. In the new régime

every adult citizen will probably be exposed to the equivalent of one hundred units of mother-power. A certain warm casualness that is promised in the domain of the sexual relations does not in my opinion offset the icy regularity of the tobacco-less, wineless, physiologically matronized state which is indicated by the most advanced and thoughtful leaders of the movement.

"I may learn in time to flit from concubine to concubine as a matter of course, as is earnestly desired by an Austrian feminist. But of what use is this element of variety, if every moment of my life is under the merciless scrutiny of the Inquisitress-General of Diet, the Women's Eugenical Board, the Committee on Private Life Inspection, and the Bureau of Sanitary Propagation. I am perfectly willing to renounce that attitude of protection toward woman which her leaders denounce as the expression of a slave morality, but I am somewhat concerned by the amount of real protection she is threatening to bestow on me. One gathers from recent literature not merely that mother-right is coming into its own. One gathers that mother-right is coming into almost everything. But that may be merely intentional overstatement in order to startle one into paying attention, just as a suffragette used to break the windows."

As to breaking windows, by the way, who could

blame woman for answering wildly to the confused arguments that were brought to bear upon her? Any one who can recall the incoherencies of woman suffrage argumentation must, I think, admit that however mad the suffragists seemed, the opposing hominists seemed even madder. It may well be that suffragettes went insane in an honest endeavor to meet insane objections. When they threw pepper on a statesman perhaps it was designed as an answer to some such anti-suffrage argument, as "Woman is a capsule covering emptiness alone. Only man can make it full." It does not seem a reasonable answer, but then I cannot imagine what a reasonable answer would be, and a normal mind might be dislocated in finding one.

It was not easy to follow a woman's reasoning when she smashed a statesman's hat in, tore his buttons off, burned buildings, broke glass, ripped Bellinis and threw apples at everybody, and as arguments they seemed irrelevant to the question of the suffrage. But it was no easier to follow the hominist when he exploded after his own manner in generalities. Indeed, the missiles of the militants seemed more applicable to human affairs than did the hominist's enormous certainties about Woman as the supreme being, holding up the universe amidst the "poetry of the pots and pans;" Woman as the universal principle of Thrift; Woman as the Queen Elizabeth who decides

"sales, banquets, labours and holidays;" Woman as the Aristotle who teaches "morals, manners, theology, and hygiene."

I do not wonder that women became confused when they read these things and replied with objects equally relevant and considerably more concrete. When a learned and entertaining writer took a long breath and called a suffragist "a jade, a giantess, a Hanoverian rat, a San José scale, a noxious weed, and a potato bug;" when another still more profound person declared that women do their thinking in "henids," whilst "in man the henids have passed through a process of clarification" and that "the very idea of a henid forbids its description; it is merely a something"—I am not surprised that the individual mentioned was somewhat haphazard in her replies.

I do not maintain that throwing a cabinet minister downstairs is either so desirable or so interesting as the essays of the brilliant and well-known hominists from which I have quoted. I merely contend that it is just as reasonable.

Sex-patriots are indeed a fierce folk, be they feminists or hominists, and they have no patience with people who in a modest bewilderment refrain from taking sides. That is why the usual treatise on "Woman, Her Cause and Cure," contains so little for us outsiders. It is intended as a missile for the contrary-minded, not as a message

to those who have not yet made up their minds. Is Woman that supreme being whose "two strong arms are the pillars that sustain the universe" or is she that "capsule covering an emptiness which man alone can fill?" There is the naked choice. Writers on Woman would think it base to hesitate. And they are angry if you try to pin them down to the particulars of actual experience. Writers on Woman hate to be pinned down to anything. It is a leaping kind of competition between feminists and hominists and each side thinks nothing of taking six centuries at a dash. Up-in-the-air habits have been formed in consequence. But on the whole I think the hominist cut the sorrier figure in the great debate. The nature of actual women seemed never to have entered his mind. Once visited perhaps by Ruth, Penelope, or some female relative since deceased, his mind was now deserted save for a few mottoes and the rush of the wind in empty spaces.

There was one, some years ago, the spirit of whose writings admirably typified his kind. He was a man of stern and ancient faiths, a believer in early woman, and compulsory charm, alternately angry and alarmed over the needless changes since the time of Homer. He said women were sterile and dying out; also that they were deadly vermin always multiplying. Sometimes a woman seemed to him a little weed soon to be up-

rooted; at others he would shrink from her as from a boa constrictor. Again he would describe her as a rat. Epithets that seemed to destroy one another were seized by him apparently in the hope that they would destroy her. Each sentence regarded by itself was vigorous and interesting, and even seemed to have a meaning when you forgot the sentences that went before.

Great is the glory of that woman, he said, who is not talked of for good or evil, who hath a veil upon her head, who vaunteth not herself,—she that is meek, and is not puffed up, and walks in quietness, and is mysterious, and suffers long. He chose as models Helen, Briseis, Penelope, Arete, Clytemnestra, Chloris, and a few others from the Greeks, and three from the Bible, and he said that women had since then degenerated. To-day, he said, all women were like "dogs in a dance," and the veil was rent and woman was ashamed. He first proposed as a remedy that the right kind of woman should fall in a cold-blooded virgin fury upon the sugar-mouthed idle kind who lived within melliferous walls. But in another mood he found this inadequate and declared that the only desirable form of society was that in which all women dressed in skins. Dissatisfied with this in turn, he finally decided that it was better for everybody concerned that women should live in trees. Women were never really happy, he said, unless

they lived in trees, and on that point his argument rested. This book was perhaps more admired than any other of its class, for it was quoted in all the serious journals in Europe and America and translated into many foreign languages; and it may be for aught I know, part of the bedside reading at this moment of ten thousand hominists.

Now the question arose at once whether he really cared for all these feminine virtues he had praised and if so why he had no word of commendation for the sort of modern women who excelled in them. A collection of feminine simplicities such as he had praised was published soon afterwards by a woman writer. Why single out Penelope for meekness, for example? Arunta women, said she, are much meeker, for if an Arunta woman leaves the house and walks about, her brother has the privilege of spearing her. Was Penelope after all more pious or self-effacing than an everyday modern Koniag? she inquired. "In Alaska a Koniag woman fasts and lies wrapped in a bearskin in a corner of her hut when her husband goes whaling." Woman "vaunteth not herself" among the Zulus for a Zulu woman may not even speak her husband's name. Charm, mystery, veil on the head, walking in quietness, and all the rest are as she pointed out nowadays plentiful, sometimes with cannibalism, sometimes without. In other words, the answer

of this feminist to this hominist was simply that if he really desired these virtues in women he had only to look about the world. There was no need whatever to regret the passing of the Greek and Hebrew meek ones. There were Thlinket women to-day who were much meeker. There were at this moment sweet natures on the Upper Congo and among the Tshi, Wagogo, Kaya-Kaya, Aleuts, Bantus, Ostiaks, and Yarabaimba—sweet feminine natures absolutely unspoiled.

The writer of the book in question did not, of course, mean anything. He did not want all idle women killed. He did not want all women to wear skins. He did not really care for tree-women and he probably never knew a man who did. Simple sweet natures, such as he imagined in the time of Homer, such as now abound along the Congo, would on the whole have bored him. And if the women of his family or acquaintance had been reduced to any such elementary condition as his language demanded, he would have been the first to complain. Not only did this hypocrite neither seek nor relish any of those tender, meek Wagogo or Kaya-Kaya simplicities in his conversation with actual womankind. At bottom he disliked them.

But I wonder if those conscientious women who wrote on feminism had gone about their business in a little more light-hearted way, whether the re-

sults would not have been more permanent. Attacking an institution is not necessarily a gloomy occupation. On the contrary there is no limit to the genuine pleasure felt by many abounding writers of our day on finding themselves on a planet where there is so much to dislike. Had these writers, bubbling over with the joy of demolition, been born on a star whose social system suited them, imagine how cheated they would have felt. Here, things being in a sad mess, they are happy, hitting out. But the women writers on feminism seem to think it follows from the painful nature of the subject that the style of writing should be painful too.

I recall, for example, another of them who in a vigorous volume on the sex relations established the fact that men and women in this world are as a rule very badly mismated and then made some reasonable guesses as to the cause and some reasonable suggestions as to improvement. It was a solid piece of work, written from the point of view commonly regarded as pernicious, that is to say, with an open mind toward social experiment. It was not a book for the mentally sheltered classes. One could not, for example, have discussed it with one's aunt, and one would hardly have wished to show it to a United States Senator, but it was an honest, independent endeavor to systematize ideas that had been in the air for fifty years or so. The

chief objection to it as a controversial treatise was that it was steeped in gloom and clogged by the jargon of the social sciences. Contemplation of the horrors of wedlock and the horrors of celibacy, the woes of all who are wrongly mated or too much mated or not mated enough, had lowered the writer's vitality. As she walked the streets of a bright afternoon she was weighed down by thoughts like these.

There is hardly one person in a hundred of those who bear the name of human, devoid of some obscure, incalculable stigma, from which every anti-social growth may proliferate like a cancer and endanger the very foundation of human society.

This weakened her as a combatant. She went heavily into the fray encumbered by sociological and biological terms. She never let an obvious thing get by her unsaid and she hated a simple way of putting it. In highly complicated language she argued that although marriage was an inheritance from ape-like pre-human ancestors, it did not follow that married people nowadays need all behave like apes. Language like this has retarded the woman movement. Language like this would probably have retarded any movement. The writers, of course, were not primarily to blame for it, because the books they had been reading were just as bad or worse.

Peel almost any page of sociology and you will find little commonplaces that were long since banished from intelligent conversation. As a woman, this writer if she met you face to face, would never think of telling you that you are not obliged to behave exactly like a monkey or that for several reasons you may be justly proud of European civilization, or that an institution when superfluous will often pass away, but as a feminist she can do so without turning a hair. The other eminent apostle of the cause would probably think twice at the dinner-table before remarking that woman ought to advance in morality and intelligence while observing the outward decencies. Dinners are often very dull, but I doubt if even at the most fashionable you could successfully make this remark to the woman you took in. But as a feminist you can carry it off with a high hand.

Social philosophies have to bluster in this large language in order to conceal the smallness of the personal basis on which they rest; and when in the sex-conflict the two sides pelt each other with universals, it is because they are ashamed to mention the rather small particulars. A hominist, for example, will often seem to wish to save the world from an invasion of unsexed Amazons when he is merely fleeing from some single female relative. The feminists reply in the same manner, damning some tiresome man by

everything that they can find in text-books of sociology, biology, and anthropology.

If hominist and feminist ever squabbled in real life after their fashion in the printed page one might be overhearing some day on the train some such conversation as this:

HE: My dear, you are quite wrong about the children's school. You do all your thinking in henids. There is a half-criminaloid in every normal woman and you seem particularly normal to-day.

SHE: I might have known you wouldn't understand it, George. How could you? Sprung from a germ-cell that has fused itself with the larger, self-contained organism, the ovulum, you'd naturally take a narrow point of view. I don't like to say it, George, but you have always been acratic. And I have never known the time when your whole personality was not absolutely determined by teleological sex characteristics. I ought not to have brought up the subject of the children's education again, but I did hope that this time you might be able to control that little tendency toward subjective fetichism, and—

HE: Their school is plenty good enough and you'd see it yourself if your psycho-physical constitution enabled you to overstep the limits fixed by femininity, but the female ever hates analysis. Never by any chance in your discussions with me can you grasp the simple notion that the significance of woman is Man. The female's peculiar characteristic, as Havelock Ellis says, has always been her nervous irritability, and you *drive me almost*—

SHE: Havelock Ellis! Why drag in that man? Do

you consider him an iliastric person? The children aren't getting on in their studies one bit and they aren't making the right sort of friends either, whereas Fanny says at the Butler School—but why expect the children's welfare to interest you? As Woman I am quite accustomed to your point of view. Among the Bobi the father always ate his eldest-born. The children of the Bangu-Zigzags, torn from their mother at the age of two, are made to sleep in trees. The ancient Poot father on the island of Zab slashed the cheek of each of his daughters with a pointed rock dipped in the juice of the toto-berry. Among the Khai-muk, Teh-ta, Thlinket, Mendi, Jabim, Loanga Bantu—but what's the use? You come by it all *so* honestly.

PLEASURES OF ANXIETY

What with the tango and the slit skirt, eugenics and the pest of women's thinking, the growing impudence of the poor, the incorrect conversion of certain negro tribes, and the sudden appearance of a rather strong article on feminism, civilization in this country, and perhaps everywhere, was drawing to its close in many a serious magazine article, some years ago. I made rather a conscientious survey of the matter at that time, and I recall to this day some of the shocking particulars. Down goes the dike, said one; and it seems to have been the only dike that could have prevented "our civilization from being engulfed in an overwhelming flood of riches, and from sinking in an orgy of brutality." Now that religion has gone, said another, "the old-fashioned principles of right and wrong have also largely disappeared." Turning a few pages, I found the "ulcer in our new morality;" a few more, and I saw the "canker at the root of education." Then I learned how low this nation was rated by a connoisseur of all the nations of the globe. "Of all the countries I have ever met," said he, as his

mind reverted along the parallels of latitude to the thirty-seven populations he had intimately known, "this country, to speak candidly is the least desirable;" and so he cast off the country as one who throws away a bad cigar.

And consider society's danger from astrologers. Abolish astrologers at once, said another contributor, and also spiritualists and quacks and prophets; for if we do not, all clean culture will soon rot and vanish, killed by the germs from this "cultural underworld." There were dozens of bodings just as dark as these in other numbers. But there was always a consolation.

When perils came out in the new numbers, it quieted one to turn to the old perils in the bound volumes of the file—yellow perils, black, white, brown, and red ones, horrors of house-flies and suffragettes, and all the evil kind of micrococcus, back to imperialism and the bicycle skirt of fifteen years before, and to read, say, of Carrie Nation ravaging Kansas, and the California lady who used to hurl college professors through the windows, thus destroying academic liberty, and McKinley "blood-guilty" and sitting on a "throne," and Thanksgiving day changed to Shame day or the Devil's own day by some Boston contributors, and the Stars and Stripes painted black and "replaced by the skull and cross-bones," and bloodshed in fiction, and hazing at West Point, and the

United States government "shaking Porto Rico over hell." And every time saved by a miracle—the same old family miracle!

I could not deny that civilization was then in danger, but it did seem to me that in any serious magazine it always must be in danger. And it so happened at that time that every writer was spared all anxiety about any actual danger. The one thing not noticed on any of the quaking pages I have mentioned was the shadow of the great war, which was then approaching.

The contributor of a peril to a magazine is not, as a rule, an unhappy person. On the contrary, he is often a large, calm man, with a good appetite, and more cheerful in his mind than we. If one could feel toward any menace to humanity as one used to feel toward tales of Jack the Giant Killer, just believing enough for a little gooseflesh, there would be more fun in it. Any man who is about half convinced that he and a few others are the sole remaining friends of civilization finds some dramatic zest in life. It is a mistake to assume that men who earn their living by anxiety are at all anxious in their private lives.

And it is the same way with all great political despairs in private conversation. The most depressing talkers you ever meet are not themselves personally at all depressed. On the contrary, they are, at bottom, rather gay persons. The hopeless-

ness of the situation really adds, for the purposes of conversation, to its charm, by absolving from the need of any personal effort other than the presumably agreeable one of talking. In middle aged conversation there is always a certain cosiness in political despair, and the thought of a large general disaster coming on has, at any rate, one bright side in the way it warms up elderly conversers. I do not mean to deny that the disaster may exist even when it is talked about. I merely mean that if a disaster did not exist it would be necessary to invent it.

For some time past in common with certain other fellow-beings, I have read the more or less radical journals with greater interest than the other kind. What is worse, I enjoy various eccentric and perhaps fanatical or one-idea'd periodicals more than I do those of sober cast and steady habits and institutional point of view. I confess a strong distaste, probably a vulgar one, for all that class of periodicals which no gentleman's library used to be without. In America I have found more pleasure in periodicals, which would be reckoned by the safe person as unsafe, than I have in the daily journalism of broadly based opinion on the one hand or the monthly journalism of no opinion at all on the other hand. I mean literally pleasure, for in this preference I have not primarily my country's good in mind,

or the future of civilization, or my own or anybody else's moral safety. I suppose I share these peculiar and ill-regulated tastes with about six million persons in the English-speaking world. We are considered a small band, and dangerous, for some reason, though the thing that most often strikes me is how numerous we are and how mild.

Nevertheless it is a minority and most people that I know, for my acquaintances are mainly among the majority, do not find pleasure in this type of journalism, and they too profess to regard it as dangerous. In this for the most part I believe they are hypocrites—not of course in their expression of a lack of pleasure but in the reasons they give for it.

I deny that their dislike is born of any sense of civic danger. It is the product of ennui. People will run, and always have run, grave risks to existing institutions so long as they are amused. When they are not amused they express alarm for the safety of the institutions. It is simply their emphatic way of saying that they are not amused. Thus you will often hear a man say of a certain periodical that it ought to be suppressed, its editor hanged, all its contributors tarred and feathered, and the premises fumigated by the health board, and then add casually that he has picked it up from time to time and simply could not read a word of it. Or you will see an elderly club mem-

ber so incensed by some article on birth control (hard enough, Heaven knows, for any one to keep his mind on, but not remarkable in any other way) as to be hardly capable of coherent speech, and find him five minutes later with all the pornographic French weeklies on his lap, soothed again and beaming, as if reassured after all in regard to the bloom of innocence that he had almost feared was passing from the world. Not that I pretend to know which is the better for him—the awful Anglo-Saxon solemnity of the article on birth control or the unconquerable hilariousness of certain French minds on subjects more or less akin to it. But neither does he know and he simply does not care. For the rule here applies as it does to a large part of current criticism that distaste sounds more emphatic when expressed as moral disapproval. With most of us the moral counterblast is nothing more than the angry rendering of a yawn.

For one person who is repelled by the views of the sort of periodicals I have mentioned there are a hundred persons repelled by the manner of presenting them, and their objections to that manner, so far as I have heard them expressed, seem to boil down to two main grievances: In the first place an apparent desire on the part of the writers to conceal their thoughts, and in the second place, and what is more important, a degree and con-

tinuity of seriousness, unattainable, even on the assumption that its attainment is desirable, by any person in the outside world.

I believe there is a basis for both charges. Concealment of thought, however,—vindictive though it often seems—is, as a rule, involuntary. Social studies are commonly the cause of this defect,—or courses taken during impressionable years at American schools of political science where any lucid way of putting things is always hated, if it is known at all.

As to the sort of seriousness of which readers complain I confess I sometimes cannot see the excuse for it. The radical mind seems never to permit itself an instant's respite from its cares. At least I have never happened to meet one of them in print when it was taking it. Pen in hand there seems only one of two things for it to do: Either to tell people how they ought to act or blame them for not doing so.

It is invariably harassed by the cares of a sort of gigantic paternity, and it slumbers not nor sleeps. If it did its watching only over Israel it might lead, comparatively speaking, rather a jolly life; but take its duty to Asia for example. Asia is, to you or me, for comfortable intervals at least, only a distant continent on the map. Asia is never for a moment anything of the sort to a man of these responsibilities. Asia to him is as

a little child constantly running some hairbreadth escape. Russia, says he, is not only the acid test of diplomacy; it is the acid test of intelligence. Now of course that is perfectly true, but if you follow him carefully and far enough you will observe that Africa also is an acid test and so is South America. You will observe also that sex, woman, Bolshevism, Shantung, war babies, North Dakota, feeble-mindedness of peace commissioners, Ireland's wrongs, syndicalism, the railway bill, Poland, classicism, ultra-realism, or anything else he may have thought about, supplies the acid test of what to think; anl that, as the months pass by, he has gradually narrowed the area of permissible thinking, that is to say the zone of opinion conforming to his own, first to a strip, then to a long line, zigzag and perilous, so narrow that two can scarcely walk abreast on it, and then if they should chance to fall to quarreling one would inevitably be lost.

Now if you will turn back six months on the track of this serious person—a thing that apparently the serious person never does— you will find half a dozen questions reported as about to flame, which, somehow, never flamed at all; and you will find a score of problems which if not solved at that particular instant were to have brought us to the verge of the abyss but which have not been solved since then and seem to have

been forgotten even by the writer—along with the abyss. In short, a six months' retrospect of him seems to reveal something seriously amiss with his seriousness. It would seem, after all, that some of the responsibilities were needlessly incurred, or that there were well earned intervals of moral repose of which he might have taken advantage.

A special and temporary reason for it in this country may have been a too close relation with the universities. There has often been an interlocking of college and editorial faculties to an extent most discouraging to an adult general reader who prefers not to continue to be taught—or at least not taught as in a university from which he was probably glad to escape. College and editorial chairs have often got so mixed up that a writer forgot which he was sitting in; hence, floods of didacticism were poured upon the public that were really intended for Sociology B. And as to chairs of English literature they were notoriously wheeled chairs, all of them, and likely to turn up at any time in serious journalism, for when a man once firmly settled down in one of them, he never got out, and even after resignation would be rolled about in it all through life, rolled generally into some editorial office.

But any one at all familiar with the pen-habits of Americans ought to know that the sort of per-

sons he thinks he is meeting in these serious pages do not exist. He will not mistake the heavy hand for the heavy heart and he will not imagine that those anxieties, running all the way from babies' milk to the state of Europe in the twenty-fifth century are really felt. He will realize the tradition of serious journalism which demands as a matter of course that a man shall conceal any tremor of indecision in regard to any subject that comes along, no matter how tremendous. And he will not confound a human attitude with a simple matter of conventional technique.

HATING BACKWARDS

So far as I can recall that course in modern history after these many years, human liberty was born somewhere in the Thuringian forest. The precise spot for the moment escapes me, but the professor knew it, perhaps had visited it. He was willing to admit that other races had their missions, not without some value to the world, but on this one thing he insisted: Had it not been for that blue-eyed, fairhaired, broad-chested early Teuton there could have been no political liberty as we enterprising western people understand the term. The Latin idea: All authority from above down—by the grace of God. The Teutonic idea: All authority from below up by the will of the people. There you have it in a nutshell—two irreconcilable ideas whose conflicts and alternations make up the history of modern Europe. Latin elements in history: The Papacy, Holy Roman Empire, divine right of kings, passive resistance, Inquisition, Counter-Reformation, every form of obscurantism, every reactionary movement down to the present day. Teutonic ele-

ments: Rise of the Free Cities, Third Estate, Witenagemot, trial by jury, British Parliament, representative government, and every popular revolution, or progressive tendency down to the present day. In short, if from the point of view of modern liberal sentiment anything in the world went wrong there was a Latin devil at the bottom of it, and if it went right there was always that early Teuton to be thanked. Nor let us forget his deep-bosomed spouse, at whose chastity so many historians have exclaimed with a degree of astonishment that seems unaccountable, for they themselves could not have been wholly without experience of chaste women in their lives. But perhaps they believed that chastity also occurred for the first time somewhere in the Thuringian forest.

Every reasonable American soon grew tired of this worthy couple and I fancy the Teutonic explanation of civilization made very little impression on the minds of our growing youth. But this sort of nonsense was rather prevalent in those days. We had formed the habit during many years, it will be remembered, of shipping to Germany hordes of imitative, unimaginative American scholars—a wise thing to do if we compelled them to stay there, but we very foolishly let them come home again. Hence in my unduly prolonged academic experience I was forever encountering unfortunate creatures who had fallen

betwixt the two stools of civilization, and did not seriously belong anywhere. A good many of them served no other purpose than to spread a sort of German measles in our academic life. However, most of us made a quick recovery. There have never been many people in this country who really cared whether the superman of history was a blond or a brunette. I, for example, am a party man, as passionate political candidates are fond of saying, but in the remotest epochs of universal history I have usually rejected my present party ties. At all events I have always approached the affairs of early German forest life rather in the spirit of a mugwump, and I have never cast my vote for any divinity that ran for the office of historic Providence on an exclusively Teutonic platform.

On the other hand, during the late war, I escaped the opposite danger of the anti-Teutonic interpretation of history of the theory of German diabolism. I owe this to good luck and not to any merit of my own. For I have no doubt that it was only the shortness of the war, after the entry of my country into it, that saved me from that same faith in the exclusively German origin of evil which pervaded the writings of my eminent contemporaries. In exhibiting their excesses here I have no desire to blame them but only to illustrate the grotesque and unnecessary forms

that patriotism has latterly assumed, particularly among the learned and literary classes.

All through the war the ablest English and French publicists, journalists and men of letters were busily engaged in reducing history to melodrama with the Teutonic element as the villain of the piece. The French were especially thorough in their methods—so thorough indeed that they went far beyond the capacity of human detestation. It was not enough to hate all Germans of the present day, it seemed, or even to hate them through eternity, as M. Paul Bourget so earnestly advised, but they must be hunted out at the beginning of their history and hated all the way down. So back these writers went in their turn to that same tiresome early German couple, looking for a prehistoric scandal, and they found that their forest life was a devilish loose one at best, and that they lied like thieves even before they were out of the forest.

As an instance of this irrelevant and almost superhuman indignation, I will cite the labors of a widely known French sociologist who set out to attack the Germans sociologically at the beginning of the war, and was about finishing his third volume when the war ended. As a man, he felt toward contemporary Germans just as you or I did during the war. As a man, he was, in common with you and me, so deeply absorbed in the

Germans under his nose that he did not much care about the Germans of a thousand years ago. That is to say, had you proved to him that excellent Germans may at one time have existed, say in the underbrush of that Thuringian forest, quite early in the Christian era, it would not have altered his opinion in the slightest as to the Germans that he saw existing. But, being by some accident of birth a sociologist, and hence a stranger to the rude pleasures of our common speech, he could not say what he liked about the Germans as he knew them. He had to be as sociological as he could.

I must grasp them, he said, biologically, ethnologically, psychologically, historically, and at last, synthetically; I must seize not only the social soul, but the individual soul, omitting no element, however slight, in their mental, moral, or material life at any moment of their history. It seemed rather a dog's life for him to lead, but he went ahead with it.

He grasped them biologically long before they were out of the forest, and he fell upon them phylogenetically the moment they emerged. He found them, as savages, more savage than other savages. He gripped them enthnologically about 300 A. D., showing that at that time, as now, they surpassed all the other races of the world as liars. He next seized with no light clasp, every

exposed portion of the German soul he could lay his hands on down to the close of the middle ages, during which time they were chiefly engaged in resisting the approach of civilization. The purer the German, the darker the deed, summed up well enough the middle ages. When the Germans through no merit of their own had reached the modern period, he grasped their soul again; and he grappled with it anew in Frederick the Great's reign, when it turned out to be about the same as it had been hitherto; and then he made sure that it remained the same for the last two centuries. In short, the soul of the German people, as seen any time these last two thousand years, looked to him for all the world like the soul of the kaiser, as described in the contemporary columns of the Allied periodicals. So it turned out just as he had suspected from the newspapers before he began to write the book.

Now the German soul to this honest and inflamed sociologist was nothing whatever but the spiritual equivalent of a German trench, at that moment on the soil of France.

The sweep of his soul over the soul of the German people was tremendous, ranging quite easily from Velleius Paterculus to Mr. Houston Chamberlain and back again, but its motive power was certainly not that of any mere scientific curiosity, psychological, historical or sociological. Its flights over German history were merely those

of an aeroplane, looking for a place to drop a bomb. To sympathizers with his cause this purpose seemed altogether laudable. If all the sociologists of war-time had been hollow, and made of the best steel, and if through a well-directed group of them shells could have been shot at the rate of 1,600 every minute and a quarter at a given point in the enemy's lines, there were a great many of their readers at that time who would have gladly seen them brought into action. But when they shot only their own sociology it was a different matter, for it was not nearly so dangerous to the foe as we should have liked to have it, and besides, from the moment of discharge, it ceased to be sociology. Thus there resulted a great waste and a misunderstanding all round and not a German was brought down by their compound adjectives. "As soon as war was declared there were let loose those mystic influences which prepared it and which were synthesized by the ideal of universal domination." This was not a sociological explanation of a people's mental attitude. It was simply a sociologist's manner of swearing. A plain man in a fight knows at least that he is fighting, whereas your sociologist as he blazes away regards himself as quietly engaged in scientific research.

And why this pious fraud of scientific terminology? As a matter of fact this sociologist in

his laboratory was less scientific in his analysis of the German soul than a French soldier at Verdun in war time. He was afraid to note any exception to this rule, and the *poilu* at the front was not. To the broader mind of the *poilu,* with his calmer sociological outlook, there were several kinds of Germans. To this scientist there was only one. The *poilu,* with scientific poise and a mind open to inconsistent facts, knew that he could shoot just as straight even if acknowledging that there were some decent Germans in the opposite ranks. This sociologist believed he could not write straight if he mentioned a single decent German.

The difficulty with the crowd psychologist seems to be that he does not allow sufficiently for the effect of his own crowd on his own psychology. In this case the crowd psychologist had written hundreds of learned pages all to the effect that it is impossible for any one to escape the contagion of the crowd. "Not only," said he, "do men of different races not understand each other but they have the greatest difficulty in imagining the possibility of holding a different view from their own." "The evolution of the sentiments is independent of our will. No one can love or hate at pleasure?" "Mental contagion affects also the isolated individual." "Race hatred is as widespread among the savants as

among the people." "Men of different races do not understand each other, above all because the generality of their opinions are all derived from the suggestions of environment acting upon the unconscious hereditary elements of which the characters of the race are formed." He did not, like an ordinary person refer casually to these laws. He elaborated them into volumes, like a sociologist. But not a word did he say about his own miraculous immunity from their operation.

As a matter of fact he marched on through this book as in a regiment—psycholigical propositions streaming like banners, sociological laws beaten like drums, analyzing the German soul as others would sing a battle hymn and trying to grasp the history of the Teutonic peoples exactly where in war time it should be grasped, that is, by the throat. His psychology emerged just where his patriotism began, forming a healthy circle. In short, he gave his crowd psychology completely over to the service of his country. It was, in his own opinion, the best thing he had, and one had, therefore, to applaud him, for giving it, even while admitting that others had given much more. But a man of his mettle could certainly have dispatched the German soul much better without sociology than with it. It was foolish to enter the German soul with that quiet

air of sociological precision instead of with a war-whoop when it came to the same thing in the end. War-whoops are more effective and less misleading.

It was not from kindness toward any Germans, however early, that many of us at that time objected to hating them so far back in their history. It was simply because it seemed to us a tactical mistake to consume in the pursuit of early Germans a warlike energy which might be put to some use against the very latest ones. Yet a large number of the ablest writers during the war would when confronted with a German criminal of any kind fall into an absent-minded fury upon his remotest ancestor. They seemed not to understand that nothing they could possibly say against Alaric the Visigoth would change in the least our sentiments toward any modern German of our acquaintance. I never understood at the time and I do not understand now, why they could not skip those early Germans. No sooner did the bombs begin to fall again upon the Rheims Cathedral than some one wrote a letter to a newspaper about the morals of the Marcomanni, and if there was a pro-German in the neighborhood he retorted that according to Tacitus the family life of the early Germans was very pure. This brought out a third man with a quotation from another classic author to the effect that so early

as the first century A. D. every German was already a scoundrel. And they put this sort of thing into all their war books. I gathered from many of these writers that the longer you looked at an early German the less you would like him, but I could not guess from any one of them why it was necessary to look at him at all. If it was for the nourishment of warlike sentiment—and that seemed to be the purpose of these authors—it was surely much better to look at any German political leader, or at any pan-Germanist pamphlet or at almost any German Lutheran divine.

When one had for his contemplation an event so rich in hostile significance as the sinking of the *Lusitania,* for instance, it seemed a pity to turn back and curse the Cimbrians. Suppose Tacitus was quite wrong in saying that the early Germans were often chaste and sometimes sober, if that is what he did say; suppose after immense historical exertions I could have proven that they were never sober and seldom chaste; why should I have bothered people by mentioning it? I did not deny that the doings of that German forest married couple, say about the year 50 A. D., might well have been perfectly scandalous, but I did deny that the point was of the slightest belligerent value to us in our existing frame of mind. Should we have happened on some Hohenzollern, for example, engaged in poisoning a well, it would

have been no relief to our feelings to hear some one with a far-off look in his eyes exclaim, "Why, how like Ariovistus!"—even if it should be established that Ariovistus had poisoned a well. We could not at that crisis hate a Quadus of the first century; we could not even hate an Alemannus of the second, not because we doubted that they were detestable, but because we had not the time. Germans of our own day were too engrossing.

One can easily understand that an academic person, like any one else, should at the very sound of the word German at that time, have been carried away by his feelings, but it does not follow that he should have been carried so far away as into the fourth century. A hot tempered man away off in the fourth century smashing miscellaneous German objects gave many of us during the war rather an impression of carelessness, when there were so many things that needed attention nearer home.

If it had really seemed that this manner of writing would bring down the German empire any sooner, there were several millions of French sympathizers in this country even in the time of our neutrality who would gladly have seen it going on, and some of us would no doubt have taken a hand in it. I for one, would gladly have had a fling at Alboin the Langobardus if I had believed it would aid in taking a single German

trench. If it would have helped General Joffre to have us hate the Germans backwards, we would have burned the *Germania* of Tacitus, expurgated Cæsar's Gallic War, and tried to get Velleius Paterculus into the schools. If it had seemed necessary to hate them forwards, we would have founded a society of detestation on the model of "Souvenez-vous," a French association already organized, and by means of "books, pamphlets, albums, placards, lectures, films, pictures, class-room manuals, New Year's gifts, prizes, plays, commemorations, anniversaries, and pilgrimages," every one of them perfectly odious, we, too, might have committed ourselves through all eternity to keeping resentment aglow. But it was only fair that we should know in advance why it should be done; and that was a point never cleared up by any of these eminent writers, during the war or afterwards.

AFTER THE WAR IN THOMPSONTOWN

I wish to say, at the start, that I see no sin in the sudden wealth of Thompsontown. I am not going to denounce the profiteers of that city or draw any moral lesson from it whatever. I do not believe that the wealth of its inhabitants, was in its origin, either moral or immoral, or that it had anything to do with the relentless working of any economic law. The people of Thompsontown became rich by accident. They did not, in the ordinary sense, make money; they were exposed to it and caught it, like a cold. To attribute the new wealth of Thompsontown to any form of business activity, lawless or otherwise, is totally to misconceive the situation. Great droves of business men became rich through their inactivity; to have avoided money they would have had to dodge.

Hat men— I select hat men, because the civilization of Thompsontown all came from hats— hat men did not conspire to raise the price of hats; nor was there any great, organizing super-hat-man who amalgamated hats, driving little hatters to suicide. Hat men made fortunes out

of hats, simply because people insisted on their doing so. I mean this literally.

I mean that the hat man would have had deliberately to thwart his customers, if he had not put up the price of hats. Some hat men did at first keep down the price of hats, and their customers scattered all over town looking for the same hats at higher prices. As wealth increased in Thompsontown, hat buyers not only preferred a worse hat at a higher price, but would walk a mile to get it.

The sort of people who became rich in Thompsontown had no personal preference whatever between any two hats when considered simply as hats, but only when considered as symbols of opulence. A five-dollar hat gave a five-dollar feeling and a fifteen-dollar hat gave a fifteen-dollar feeling, and so on, and that is all there was to it. Feeling varied with the price, not price with the feelings. Feelings varied with the price, the object purchased remaining the same. Until the people of Thompsontown learn the prices of things, they do not know what to think about them.

Now these thousands of people in Thompsontown have made money merely because they did not break off habits which, perhaps, after all, they could not have broken off. People with shops in State Street became rich just because they did

not close their shops in State Street. Fortune favored every dealer just because he did not cease to deal. They did not seize an opportunity; they merely waited to be seized by it; and while there were exceptions, it is safe to say in general that the new wealth of Thompsontown was the reward for going where you usually went and sitting there.

Then came the problem of spending it. They bought automobiles, of course, two or three at a time apparently, and they paid sixty dollars for silk shirts, and forty dollars for shoes, and the women wore things in the street that made even them uncomfortable, and State street became in several ways the equal of Fifth Avenue. You stood an equally good chance of being killed by an equally good motor-car, there was as much inconvenience in getting about, and the noises were almost identical. There was nothing gay or high-flying about it, but you cannot blame them for that. Spectacular spending has always been exaggerated and outside print, the madder prodigalities are hard to find. People who buy ten thousand dollar tooth picks, do it by stealth. God sees, and Mr. Upton Sinclair—but not the rest of us.

But nobody seemed to be doing with his money anything that he particularly wanted to do. Nobody ever showed an eccentricity. Nobody could be said in any sense to be having his fling, and

while the newly enriched have not the *abandon* anywhere that you expect of them, in Thompsontown they are particularly tied down. Not only has there never been anything to fling to in Thompsontown, but there have never been the sort of people who could fling. Monte Cristo would go in a limousine to the Men's Forum of the Central Baptists in Thompsontown; Heliogabalus would buy a thousand-dollar overcoat; and each would do it not by way of preliminary indulgence, but after exhausting every other joy. Double their fortunes and they would go in two limousines to the Men's Forum of the Central Baptists and buy two thousand-dollar overcoats.

And while it was true of everything bought by the great, new, nonplussed hordes of the suddenly prosperous, down to shoes, shirts, underwear, things applicable to the most unimaginative needs, it was particularly true of things into which the personal fancy might more freely enter, such as household furniture, ornament, bric-a-brac. But personal fancy never did enter. Money came before desire had emerged, and the joy of getting was in counting the cost of what you got. To the ten thousand newly enriched citizens of Thompsontown one thing was literally as good as another, and divergent prices had to be invented as the only means of telling things apart.

This had always been something of a difficulty

in Thompsontown and the city itself is really the result of this embarrassment. People who were not utterly distracted as to what to do with their money would never have built it as they did. The public buildings were all put up for about $500,000 apiece, and for no other imaginable motive. The richer you got the less you cared what, in an architectural way, happened to you, so long as it was a good deal. If a multi-millionaire, you let them build you anything, provided it was big enough, and they usually decided on an orphan asylum with a front door like a valentine.

All Main Street was built up by well-to-do people who had not the slightest personal inclination as to the sort of places they wanted to live in. Its domestic architecture is a sincere and adequate expression of that frame of mind. There is not a house in Main Street that does not assert emphatically the owner's sentiment: What does it matter where I am?—and there is really no reason for preferring any house to any other, aside from the price. Cost in Thompsontown has always been the true key to the nature of things.

Political economy has not a word of sense to say to such phenomena as the newly rich of Thompsontown. What becomes of the law of supply and demand when applied to the front parlors of Maple Street? If you charged enough for bunches of bananas, you would see a bunch of

bananas in the front window of every house on Maple Street. You will find anything in a house on Maple Street, if it costs enough; and that is the only reason why you find it there. You cannot account for these things in the manner of economists; it is absurd to suppose that anybody wanted them.

But, in saying that the new wealth is not the result of enterprise, I do not mean that Thompsontown is an unenterprising or from a practical point of view a backward place. On the contrary, it is famous for its energy. If I were Walt Whitman I could sing as well in Thompsontown as on Brooklyn Bridge. I could sing all day of hats and corset-covers, of shoes, nails, lead pipe, soap, and gas fixtures, regarded as embodiments of Thompsontown will-power. Nor do I mean anything invidious in respect to progress.

In public spirit, Thompsontown has caught up to Syracuse, and it has surpassed, I believe Zenobia, Esopus, Rome, Thebes, Ephesus, Priapus, every city in that part of the State. Community song, community bath-tubs, community churches; public teas, talk, and chicken-dinners; welfare works; public outdoor movements if you want to go outdoors; public indoor movements if you want to stay inside; helping hands held out so thick that it is impossible to slip between them—there never was a better town to lose a leg in or

in which to be saved from a life of shame. Thompsontown is filled with public spirit almost as soon as the spirit is made public, no matter what the spirit is. A headline carried for eight days by the better sort of newspapers becomes an institution there.

No sooner had the new patriotism been invented—I mean the kind that would hang Thomas Jefferson to a sour apple tree—than the clergy of Thompsontown were solid to a man for the deportation of anybody that it occurred to anybody to deport; and the whole town became so safe and sane that it would have brained an anarchist before it knew he was one. It would be a madman who complained that Thompsontown did not, in a public way, keep abreast of things.

But private spirit does seem somewhat lacking in Thompsontown. Citizens of it are magnificent in groups, but, detach the individual from his group and he loses color—like a fish scale. And the lack of personal differences makes it hard to imagine a personal preference, and as you meet rich people singly you lose respect for the rights of property and the laws of the land. Robbing them does not seem like robbery; it seems like rescue; it is impossible to think they desire their possessions. Pillage seems rather attractive. You could not hate a Hun who plundered Main Street; you could only wonder at him. If a bomb

fell anywhere, it would do a lot of good. That is the trouble with looking at the new wealth of Thompsontown; it makes you a reckless man. It is impossible to avoid the reflection that even with a soviet in the City Hall and the whole town living in phalansteries and the dullest Utopia ever dreamt of come to pass, there could, after all, be no diminution of those personal diversities which present day society is said to keep alive—varieties of art and mental interest, individual expression, fancy, freedom of view, idiosyncrasy—and no danger at all of the dead level dreaded by the orthodox. For the personal diversities do not exist and the level could not be deader.

And freedom of mind, always so hard to attain in Thompsontown, became impossible after the war, when the town shook with the fear of Bolshevism. Indeed, it was dangerous to possess a mind after the lectures on Bolshevism began in the People's Athenaeum. I recall one which ran about as follows:

There was no such thing as Bolshevism in the sense of a body of social and economic theories and ideas, said the speaker. The Bolsheviki had no theories and no ideas, and the only thing that need be said about their programme was that it was a programme of crime. They were simply all murderers, bandits, and degenerates paid by Germany to plunder and kill. They were ex-

clusively the product of German intrigue. Many years before the war the Germans said to themselves, "Let us create the Bolsheviki who will so weaken the Russian state that we may get control of it." So they created the Bolsheviki.

After the war, when the Bolsheviki were apparently weakening the German state as well as the Russian, that also was the result of a German plot. The Germans were pretending to be Bolshevists in order to frighten the Allies into making softer terms of peace. Bolshevist uprisings were arranged in Germany and in some instances made to look like revolutions. Here and there people would be massacred or a premier assassinated or an alleged Bolshevist hacked to pieces, but in this the Germans were not serious. They were only trying to make the Allies think they were. A German may be sanguinary, said he, but he is never serious. When they were killing each other in the streets by the hundreds they were laughing in their sleeves at the impression of seriousness they were producing upon other people. Germans are always up to some such tricks when they kill each other by the hundreds, said he. When they were suppressing Bolshevism in Berlin, they had no objection to Bolshevism. They were not even thinking about Bolshevism. They were simply thinking, "What a splendid hoax on the Allies!" Nor did the setting up and

pulling down of soviets arise from any interest in soviets. They did not care either one way or the other about soviets. The setting up and pulling down of soviets was a mere ruse to produce the impression that soviets were being set up and pulled down. Fortunately, the Allies were not duped by this affection and accordingly the programme failed.

And now, according to the speaker, began the huge final German conspiracy which, if not balked, would sweep from the world every vestige of civilization. Germany's plan was to ruin the world in order to rule it. To do this she was about to engage along with Russia in a campaign of Bolshevization in all the nations on the earth. This would not adhere to a fixed programme but would, in every country, take the course that soonest led to chaos, whatever that course might be, and when chaos was accomplished Germany would at once help herself to anything she wanted in it. There was but one remedy. Bolshevism everywhere must be stamped out instantly by force.

I repeat these too familiar remarks because although they had long been matter of journalistic routine in the respectable press of three countries their effect on Thompsontown was very inflammatory, and a tragic consequence was narrowly escaped. Eager to destroy Bolshevists when there were no Bolshevists in Thompsontown to destroy,

the patriotic element in the town turned in its wrath upon old Professor Henderson.

Now it would be impossible to imagine a man more remote from all the issues that agitated Thompsontown than old Professor Henderson. Some ante-natal circumstance had destined him to Thompsontown and he went on living there out of sheer absence of mind, obviously irrelevant to everything in it. As a political philosopher, he had been known for thirty years outside Thompsontown for his singular faculty of animating subjects commonly put to sleep in American universities. He was also one of the few humane writers on history during his generation, and he had actually brought a touch of life to the minds of other writers of history, which of itself to any one acquainted with American historians seemed superhuman. For the rest he was a speculative and inquiring sort of person who approached subjects somewhat in the manner of Socrates, trusting that in these modern days he would escape the cup of hemlock; and in this spirit he discussed the fundamentals of political philosophy, turning patriotism inside out, turning the virtues upside down, that is to say, doing everything that people have done in the discussion of political philosophy, ever since the Greeks began. In short, everybody knew him from his writings for the sort of man who gave other

people's intellects something to do and thus kept other people out of mischief. There might have been some things in Professor Henderson's writings that would have shocked a policeman, but if the policeman had read them all through he would almost certainly have decided not to arrest him.

But he seemed of a sudden dangerous to all the authorities of Thompsontown. The *Eagle-Record* set out in pursuit of him in six leading articles; and four speeches were made against him at the Veterans' Lodge. There was a hunt for suspicious circumstances, and the suspicious circumstances were found. They consisted of detached passages from his books, which sounded rather sanguinary. It was understood that the prosecuting officer was about to move and people said it would serve the old pro-German right. Four young men who had spent their war-time in New Jersey talked of lynching; and the Rev. Madison Brace, brother-in-law of the millionaire proprietor of Neuralgia Syrup, referred in his sermon at the Tabernacle to the "poison of Bolshevism instilled into the minds of youth under the guise of political philosophy." Then to the surprise of everybody the matter was dropped and it leaked out afterwards that all the seditious passages in his books were found in the Bible or in the Areopagitica of Milton.

Now, as I write this, immediately after the nar-

row escape of Professor Henderson, I do not find the situation altogether depressing. On the contrary I see a chance for the return of a certain measure of mental liberty to Thompsontown. I believe that instances of this nature may carry their own cure even in Thompsontown and that more steps in this direction will result in something so extreme that it will set free enough plain sense to sweep it all away. For assume that this incident had been a trifle more extreme. Suppose, for example, that some uncommonly vigilant constable of conversation employed by our League of Patriotic Speech had caught Professor Henderson at something heinous—poisoning a State Street man's mind, say, by talking about a higher patriotism—or caught him with the *Divine Monarchy* in his hand speculating. Suppose then after being thrown into jail Professor Henderson is brought before a judge who is a constant reader of all the League's publications and a person extremely cautious in his thoughts and the judge decides, without a crease in the marble solemnity of his countenance, to sentence Professor Henderson to five years in chains.

It would not necessarily be a dark moment for Thompsontown when the chains were fastened on Professor Henderson. On the contrary, it might be the dawning of its day. There might begin a new spirit of understanding and geniality from

the very moment when Professor Henderson was thrown into chains. He is so obviously the sort of person who ought not to be in chains that outside Thompsontown the sense of incongruity would be instantly and widely awakened; and some of the sense might find its way back into Thompsontown. Wit might sift in through little cracks in the walls of editorial rooms hitherto supposed to be altogether thought-proof. Common sense might descend upon the people in waves upon waves. And with the striking of the chains from Professor Henderson might come the clearing away of the whole nightmare of indiscriminate and unintelligent repression and some glimmer of a notion as to who are enemies and who are not in the world around. Having once reached the outer limit of burlesque, Thompsontown might perhaps revert in the direction of reality.

INTERNATIONAL CANCELLATION

From hasty and disconnected reading of the treaty discussion I may have became confused in mind, and I am not sure that I recall exactly the names, dates, and other details of a certain article by an expert in foreign affairs that I recently encountered, but I can at least reproduce the spirit of it. It was on the subject of Lower Magnesia, with which the writer says every reader ought to be as familiar as he is with the Banat of Temesvar.

Now the Lower Magnesians are, he says, of the purest Jingo-Sloven breed, and for nine hundred years they have burned for reunion with their kinsmen of Mongrelia, from whom, as everybody knows, they were ruthlessly torn by Frederick Barbarossa. From that day to this they have hated the North Germans to a man, and the duty before the Peace Conference was perfectly clear. It should either have erected Lower Magnesia into an autonomous principality within the limits of the ancient Duchy or Citrate (that is to say, between the Bugrug mountains and the river Mag), or it should have united it with Mongrelia.

Instead of that it was provided, by articles 131-422 of the treaty, that the question should be left to a plebiscite. This gave the Germans their chance and they did exactly what the writer, knowing the German character, expected them to do. They secretly raised an army of 700,000 men and threw it into coal holes from which it was to emerge at the moment of the plebiscite, disguised as Magnesian school-teachers. This was done so secretly that even now no one among the Allies has the slightest suspicion of it. The writer himself knows how secret it was because he has it on the authority of a secret document, which document is so secret that its existence is unknown even to the man who possesses it.

I should like to see set up along with any fragment of the League of Nations that may still remain when these words appear in print, a sort of clearing-house for international impressions. Clearing-house may not be quite the word for it, but it suggests what I believe to be the necessary limitations of the plan, which would not concern itself with the correction of impressions but only with the setting off of one impression against another. As the press of each country is at every moment, contradicting itself, cancellation on a large scale would inevitably result.

That all writers on foreign affairs are simply guessing is, I believe, a safe rule to lay down. In-

deed they themselves seldom pretend to be doing anything else, and I have no doubt that the better sort among them are often shocked by the serious way in which they are taken by those whom they seek to entertain. Of course I do not deny that the dark forces, dangerous undercurrents, and sinister designs evoked by the writers on foreign affairs do sometimes actually exist. I simply mean that their existence ought never to be inferred from their evocation. Their evocation is constant, their existence only occasional.

Take, for example, the vast Anglo-Saxon conspiracy as conceived by a dozen French journalists at this moment (thought it may be forgotten the next moment) and the equally vast French conspiracy as conceived by a dozen English and American ones. Dozen for dozen these writers seem to me, from their manner of writing, almost equally astute. They all have the same air of certitude and the same reticence as to the reasons for it. Dozen for dozen they are evenly matched so far as I can see, as regards access to those sure but unmentionable sources of truth, which are known only to the writer on foreign affairs, and as regards intimacy with those highly placed and serious persons, not to be named without violating a confidence, who though stonily impenetrable to all the rest of the world, pour out all the secrets of their bosoms as soon as they learn that the

person they are talking to writes for a newspaper.

In short, I see no reason why these two groups of expert writers on foreign affairs are not equally entitled to my confidence.

Nor do I deny that both conspiracies may as a matter of fact exist. I admit that the American and British governments, working in the dark, may have cemented that Anglo-Saxon blood-pact for the extirpation of all the Latin races in the world. And I admit that, unseen by any human eye, the French premier and his commander-in-chief may have perfected that gigantic plan for the Gallo-Latin domination of the universe. Dastardly designs, both of them, I say, and I certainly have no desire to throw anybody off his guard in respect to them. But there is one thing I will not admit about this whole black devilish business that may be brewing around us under cover of the night, and that is that any writer in either group, whose article I have happened to read, really knows any more about the thing than I do. They not only do not mention any reason for supposing that the respective plots exist or any person who believes in the plot's existence but they do not even tell you how—whether by dreams, ghosts, portents, flights of birds, thunder on the left side, songs of sacred chickens, or hierophancy—they themselves got a glimmer that the plot does exist.

In other words, they seem to take for granted

the plot's existence and then prove in great detail the horrors of it—which is precisely the opposite of what any serious person in possession of the dreadful information would do. He would work with might and main to prove to other people the plot's existence and he would then take for granted their appreciation of its undesirable results. Even if the world is rent in twain by one or both of these conspiracies upon the publication of these words, I shall still insist that none of these writers had the slightest notion that it would come to pass.

The nonchalance of writers who say they see a world in flames, would be incredible if they thought they saw it. No man in private life would casually say to the surrounding family of an evening that in well-informed circles on the second floor he had learned—or that, from authorities on the first floor, credibly reported to be in the confidence of the janitor, he had gathered —that the upper stories of the building were at the moment on fire, nor would he, on remarking the serious nature of the affair, return to the reading of his newspaper. These writers would never shoot a dog in the light spirit in which they damn a nation. When it comes to the shooting of a dog, writers are always able to produce some sort of an excuse. I may add that when the world does actually burst into flames the writers I have mentioned are not the ones who notice it.

Now the impartial display of this sort of thing by the central body to which I have referred would show, I think, that the suspicion of hostile designs has as a rule no basis in the public mind, or even in the writer's, but is a mere matter of journalistic routine in every country; that of course there are exceptions but that this is the rule. And then if it culled from each national press the narrowest thoughts of its narrowest thinkers, for submission without remark to the quiet scrutiny of many lands, who knows that the countries might not be drawn together out of sheer distaste for the sort of people who held them apart? The combing out from each press of all its chauvinists, of all its imperialists, colonial expansionists, and power-worshippers, of its glory-talkers and debaters of prestige, inventors of wounds in the national vanity, moral idiots of the *beau geste,* people with patriotic proud-flesh, Buncombes and Bobadils and royalists of France, and American manifest-destinarians, glorifiers of a provincial grudge, exploiters of a mean and proximate past with no basis in a true tradition—this mere combing of them out into common heaps as common nuisances to nations—who knows that it might not work of itself some miracle of mutual comprehension?

A progressive writer in his latest volume, on the world's future, is madder in his dreams of universal democracy than he was in the volume be-

fore. The peoples of the earth are all alike everywhere, he seems to say, and if you break down the political dykes that divide them, they will all flow together in a sea. There are no real moral frontiers, or religious, ethnic, intellectual, or economic ones, and there are no real differences rooted in the past. No nation ought to have a past peculiar to it, says he; it is a foolish thing invented by the soothsayers. Nations should have a common past and listen only to their common story, and try to forget their own peculiar yarns, mere family gossip for the most part. Forget who your father was and try and realize that your brother is a Calmuck; and if the thing is done with a good will all round, think of the warmth of the universal intimacy.

I confess I have not much hope of an early advent of this universal warmth. Even Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Americans do not look alike to me, despite the large, impressive, undeniably cordial and brotherly circumstance that all of them are bipeds; and I am no more capable of surveying them with the super-patriotic eye of this detached observer than I am of taking the point of view of an angel flying over them.

But the attitude of this writer seems to me in one respect mundane and even practical. If people are not so much alike as he says they are, at least they are less unlike than anyone would sup-

pose them to be from the language of the international impressionists; and since these folk are forever inventing imaginary differences, it seems worth while, in the interest of international comity, to emphasize a point of likeness now and then, perhaps even to exaggerate it.

Since the international impressionists never have any reason for their impressions of the respective nations that they write about, why not follow the instincts of humanity and be equally well impressed by them all? For a moment at least, that is the logical consequence of reading them. After reading a sufficient quantity of the language of international comparisons I am forced for a short time almost into an attitude of brotherly love, owing to the lack of proper food for hatred.

THE LESSONS OF LITERARY WAR LOSSES

Several good British writers apologized during the war because for one reason or another they could not keep all their literary work on a war footing. One of them, for example, author of a number of agreeable novels in the spirit of Anthony Trollope, thought it necessary to notice the complaint of certain critics that his pleasant story about life in an English country house was an "anachronism"—presumably because no shells dropped on it. He tried to reason with these monomaniacs, arguing that interest in quiet things is not obsolete even in war time and that a novelist may legitimately go on doing the sort of thing that he thinks he can do the best. It would seem to a sane person fairly obvious.

Reasonable people at that time were not blaming novelists because their writings were not concerned immediately with war. On the contrary, they were rather saddened by the too palpable effects of the war on the work of many of their gifted contemporaries. From the point of view of man power it may have been desirable to get a novelist into the war, but from the point of

view of literary advantage it was found after three years' experience that it was often undesirable to get the war into a novelist. Of course, a regiment of novelists marching to the front, each determined to bring down a German, might have been a cheering spectacle, but the sight of those novelists all marching home, each determined to bring out at least one war novel and possibly two, would have been on the whole depressing.

For it was clear to any one who looked into the matter at all closely that one of the disasters of the war was the fancied necessity of writing about it on the part of persons who were manifestly designed by nature for something else. On reading an article by Mr. Kipling, for example, it was impossible to escape the conclusion that the loss to letters was far more serious than the damage it did to the enemy's cause. Fill an author with a titanic theme and you do not make him titanic; you often merely burst him; and one could scarcely turn the pages of a serious magazine during the war without stumbling over the ruins of what had once been a man of letters. The fact that they had perished nobly did not console me for their having gone to pieces, nor do I think it unfair to raise the question now whether they perished needfully.

Consider, for example, the case of a brilliant British writer, who, I believe, wrote against the

Germans about once a week after the war began and was unable to break the habit off till two years after the war had ended. He acquired the ability of hating the Germans all through the Middle Ages. He could hate all of Prussia from the earliest times down to the present moment, and all the Teutonic Knights, and every minute in the life of each Elector of Brandenburg. If shells were bursting on the women of his neighborhood, he would attack at once and with the utmost fury the character of Frederick the Great, and in the course of the same article in his London weekly paper he would find time also for an unfavorable mention of the writings of Walter von der Vogelweide. Now, his feeling toward the Germans was precisely my own and that of almost every one I knew, and I need not say that any havoc he may have wrought among the Germans was welcome to me. I did not wish to see the Germans escape from this agreeable writer. But I should have liked to see him escape from the Germans if it had been compatible with the public interest, and I raise the question whether, if he had done so from time to time, many of them would after all have really got away. For, naturally enough, in writing constantly upon so monotonous a subject as the moral defects of this morally primitive people this writer fell into a sort of rudimentary routine. It was impossible

to write against the German morals as we knew them without being rudimentary, for you were addressing them, so to speak, from the threshold of civilized life. It was as if you were contemplating the original ape-man in circumstances so acute that even an anthropological interest in him was, for the moment, impossible.

The Germans as we understood them at that moment were not a subject around which the imagination of a civilized man really cared to play. As the daily news of pillage, rape, assassination, and mendacity arrived, (and no exceptions to these rules were ever published) curiosity about them was soon sated and interest in them, though for the moment keen, was of so elementary a nature as hardly to admit of a varied literary expression. A rather coarse cartoon was a sufficiently delicate reply to the most subtle diplomatic language of a German statesman. In short, the entire situation from the moral point of view was, one may say, extremely crude.

So it happened that the monotonous succession of barbarities by which this morally backward people made its presence felt each week evoked from this writer each week a monotonous succession of ejaculatory moral sounds, which were no doubt suited to the nature of the subject, but which, I believe, could have been just as competently rendered by a large number of persons, not

one of whom could do certain valuable other things which this writer was capable of doing. And therein lay the waste. Of course he acquired great facility. Waked up suddenly out of a sound sleep, he could begin instantly, "Another brutal aspect of the burning of babies alive is——" and finish the article almost mechanically. But I believe almost any one could have been trained to find the brutal aspects of the burning of babies alive.

Let us suppose the Germans had taken another backward step—a step not difficult to imagine, and one that they might have taken had the general staff thought it desirable. Suppose that proceeding logically from the idea attributed to the Kaiser that "For me humanity is bounded by the Vosges," they had actually regarded all people to the west of the Vosges, in common with other animals, as material for food and that cannibalism among them became as well established and as customary a thing in our estimation as, say, the murder of a woman or a child.

The fact that the Germans ate their prisoners, let us say, received among the Allied nations all the attention that such a subject naturally would deserve. Imagine it displayed everywhere on posters, noted in state messages, recorded in minute detail in the daily press, and assuming its proportionate share in ordinary conversation—

in short, taking firm hold of the common mind. In these circumstances it seems to me doubtful that any great amount of literary talent need have been devoted merely to showing that the course of the Germans was objectionable.

The case against cannibalism need not have been made out with any great skill and could have been safely left to much more commonplace persons than Mr. G. K. Chesterton, Professor Gilbert Murray, Maurice Donnay, M. Albert Capus, M. Pierre Loti, and many other essayists, novelists, playwrights, and scholars whose personalities during the war were not to be distinguished from any other portion of the newspaper. Sir Gilbert Parker need not have sent me and every one else in my office building a handsome, carefully prepared pamphlet answering the Hindenburg-Ludendorff defense of cannibalism on grounds of military necessity, and Mr. William Archer would not have had to develop with any particular ability his reply to the philosophic contention of Professor Oswald, Professor Haeckel, and other leaders of German thought, that the eating by Teutons of a non-Teutonic race was not to be considered as cannibalism.

The argument of Count von Reventlow that cannibalism was the corollary of pan-Germanism, necessarily involved in the very conception of the Germanic absorption of inferior races, though ad-

mittedly logical, would probably not have required an elaborate reply. And as more of our fellow citizens found their way to the German sideboard the less need there would be that the ablest men of letters of their time should devote their energies to the bald and iterative expression of anti-cannibal views. I do not mean that they should not have written against cannibalism if they had wished to. I merely mean that to judge by analogies their longest essays might have been less effective than the simple publication of a German bill of fare.

People foresaw in a general way the literary effects of the war. They knew that it was likely to devastate light literature in the fighting nations, but they could not have anticipated the startling concrete results. They knew, of course, that an essayist hit by a bomb would cease writing, but they could have had no idea that the essayists who were *not* hit would be so strangely altered when they went on writing. There was no external scar on the persons of dozens of eminent writers, who had presumably remained in perfectly safe places and suffered none of the privations of war; yet from the reader's point of view they were hardly recognizable.

Before the war it was generally supposed that the effect of a strong feeling upon a light literary character was on the whole beneficial, and there

are many to this day who argue that the reason why American light literature is usually so very light that no one can feel it, is because there are no strong, high, noble feelings in the writers themselves. I have heard it suggested that my friend, Mr. Harold McChamber (whose career I have sketched in another chapter), had he been borne aloft on some great tempest of emotion, would have been George Meredith—or just as remarkable—and that if the inner life of Professor Woodside were disturbed a modern equivalent of Dante's *Inferno* would emerge.

But what were the results of shaking up dozens of delightful authors during the war? Simply, that soon after August 4th, 1914, they became almost completely unreadable, and have remained so ever since.

This is not said in an unfriendly spirit. The cause of these writers was my own; nor do I respect them any less as men for their having rather gone to pieces as writers. Indeed, they may be regarded as sufferers from internal injuries honorably sustained; for the casualties of war are subtle and various.

The bomb that takes off a private's leg may render a good poet perfectly useless for several months. Down went thousands of stout British seamen in the Battle of Jutland and away went Mr. Chesterton's commonsense, as he argued with

some equally stricken German that the fight was not really a German Salamis, but, on the contrary, a British Waterloo. While lives are nobly lost at the front, wits are lost as nobly in the magazines, and after a battle there are almost as many miscarriages among verse writers as among mothers.

To the right-feeling reader, the foolish thing he encountered in war time on the formerly intelligent page seemed a sort of literary lesion, patriotically incurred. But he was under no obligation whatever to go on reading the page. The healthy inner violence of the writers did not take an adequate outward form, and the fact that their hearts were eminently in the right place, afforded a moral, not a literary gratification. It showed how vain are the current recipes for the amelioriation of belles-lettres. Passion and a high purpose, and freedom from the least taint of commercialism, a great subject and a stirring time—all the ingredients recommended by American magazine critics for twenty years in the reconstruction of the world's literature—went to the making of the very worst volumes that these authors had as yet achieved.

Scorn has been highly valued as a literary motive, but the scorn of the satirist was no longer beautiful in the contempt and anger of his lip, and when he dipped his pen in gall—a proceeding much esteemed by literary commentators—the gall

turned out to be the very thinnest of writing fluids. Consecrate a *littérateur* and to your astonishment you cannot read him. Put him in a battle mood and he gives you nothing to think about, no exploding thought of any use whatever, except perhaps to throw at some enemy whom probably it will not hurt. The lesson of the war seems to be adverse to all the current theories of inspiration in literature. If you inspire light literature too much, apparently, there is merely a blow-out.

This, by the way, must dishearten the group of critics and novelists who, at intervals these past twenty years, have been telling other critics and novelists what is the matter with them. The amount of disagreeable contemporary reading these devoted men have forced themselves to do for this purpose is prodigious. One of them said that after having gone through all the contemporary writings of France, Russia and Germany, and found them rather bad, he read everything at all tiresome in America, and found it worse yet. Another not only knows the exact difference between Mr. Harold McChamber and Mr. Curtis Lane—which of itself is rather a subtle matter—but he can tell to a dot why and how much they both fall short of genius.

Mr. Barton Worcester says the novels of Mr. Harold McChamber are "shams;" mere "puddles of words," "stale, distorted" and full of "mil-

dewed pap," but he can pass the stiffest sort of examination in them all, and will quote you page after page of the longest, evidently having learned them by heart. He knows why Mr. Harold McChamber is so much worse than Mrs. Pauline McHenry Donald—he even knows why each of them exists—and he has solved a hundred other just such knotty problems. You cannot help admiring these conscientious, indefatigable men, going on and on against their wills, borrowing novels from the cook; following up the elevator boy and becoming learned in the subject of his literary contemplations. But you cannot help rather pitying them.

Now, the result of all this hard labor and literary anguish may be summed up quite simply. The faults of American writings, according to these critics, all arise from the lack of proper motives in the writer. They do not say it in so many words, but they plainly imply a genuine belief that if they could substitute some of their own better moral and artistic purposes for the present motives of any novelist, however silly, that novelist would soon become quite sensible.

One critic is certain that if the American novelist would stop caring so much about old women and little boys he would surely be considered a much better artist.

A second critic believes that if authors would

be less anxious to appear orthodox and cease conspiring to suppress all mention of the sexual relation they would improve. A third critic thinks inner freedom is the certain cure. And one thing follows from the arguments of all of them as absolutely certain: Extract the commercial motive from any author, however bad, and he will be bettered.

There is not the slightest foundation for any one of these beliefs, as the lesson of the war reminds us. Too many gifted authors were, with a lofty purpose for a splendid cause, writing complete nonsense. Too plain was it, even among writers at one time quite remarkable, that moral exaltation is often followed by literary decay. As to the harmless, ordinary American author, over whom the critics above cited have toiled so hard, there is no help for him from their methods. On the contrary, if they had their way with him, they would simply make him uncomfortable without benefiting the reading public in the least. Why free the inner life of Mr. Harold McChamber, when in all aesthetic probability none of it could escape? Suppose Mr. Harold McChamber gave himself up utterly to Mr. Worcester; went to a lonely place with him and listened every day, and Mr. Worcester really interested him in Shakespeare or Mr. Ezra Pound, and tugged and heaved him toward the higher plane, Mr. Mc-

Chamber in no wise resisting; suppose finally that the white flame of Mr. Worcester actually passed over into Mr. McChamber. Mr. McChamber's artistic substance being the same, there would be no change in his manner of writing, and the small, discerning class of readers whom Mr. Worcester has in mind would probably never know that Mr. McChamber was burning bright inside. It simply would cost Mr. McChamber five million readers and fill him with a violent emotion which he lacked completely the ability to express.

In fact, it is a rash man who in view of the lesson of the war, will recommend any definite external or internal crisis for the amelioration of any author—good or bad. The most agreeable authors of the time went monotonously insane under conditions which, on the principle of a great body of current literary comment should have improved them.

ON BEHALF OF MR. HAROLD MC-CHAMBER

In those exalted circles where the condition of American popular novelists is regarded with grave concern, it is assumed that certain of them have stooped to conquer. It is assumed that they were at one time capable of a higher class of work but deliberately turned away from it to pander to the public. It would almost seem from some of these articles that the novelist before becoming popular has a battle with his conscience, saying to himself in so many words, "Shall I pander?" and then after a brief struggle answering "Yea." Then he sells one hundred thousand copies and is lost to Art.

I have sometimes become quite sentimental about him on reading these articles for it would appear from them that the poor creature really knows how low he is and must suffer a good deal from remorse, even while outwardly cheerful. Yet the situation cannot be so bad as that. Indeed there is evidence that the situation does not exist at all, outside the minds of these critics. Let us take the following instance, for which a parallel can be found by any one who looks for it:

Mr. Harold W. McChamber, of stout commercial stock crossed now and then with a Baptist clergyman, was born at South Bend, Indiana, in 1873, graduated at Cornell University, wrote for no matter what newspaper and no matter where, and achieved his first literary success, a very modest one, some twenty years ago, with the publication of *Sally of the Bogs*. This was an intensive study in ashen grey realism, which won immediately a *succès d'estime* for the extraordinary veracity of its local color. Not one serious reviewer failed to remark on its "atmosphere" or to say that it was "convincing" or to discern unmistakable "signs of promise" in the author.

Miss Edna Ladell in the New York *Times Saturday Supplement* after saying that it at once made her "sit up" declared: "The reality of it all grips, compels, fascinates, overmasters. Everywhere the great devouring, permeating, obsessing bog. You see it, smell it, taste it. Everywhere the suck of the mud, the splash of the frog, the cry of the bittern, the glint of twilight on the pools, blackened stumps, moss, dank leaves, turtles, the smell of decaying roots and wet shoeleather. And the lives of the simple characters are bog-driven, bog-confined. With supreme artistry he has given us an actual slice of raw dripping, oozy bog-life. A veritable masterpiece."

Except for a writer in the New York *Sun* who

called it an "unpleasant story of mud and rheumatism" almost every other reviewer seemed grateful for the way it brought the bog home to him; and the late Mr. W. D. Howells in a cordial letter to the author said that as an authentic portrayal of an Indiana bog community it was unparalleled in American fiction. He compared it to Miss Edith Bamborough's picture of mid-Tennessee mill-town life, to Mrs. Buxby's powerful grasp of the southern Georgia sand-hill country, to Miss Amy Barton's mastery of northwestern Connecticut upland farm society, and to Mr. John D. Pott's remarkable realization of the atmosphere of the Erie Canal. He applauded Mr. McChamber's courageous break with the cheap traditions of conventional romance, and urged him to continue as he had begun, saying in conclusion, "You have made that little corner of the land your own."

Mr. McChamber did not, as is well known, continue as he had begun, but on the contrary within less than two years produced one of the six best-selling historical novels of the period and from that time to this has repeated that success at surprisingly short and regular intervals. Also, as is well known, in gaining this vast new audience he lost that penetrating old one which had discerned the beauty of *Sally of the Bogs;* and henceforth if serious reviewers noticed him, it was to contrast

his early artistic endeavor with his present commercial achievement.

In literary circles his work was soon taken as typical of those broad, low levels that a discriminating taste will instinctively avoid. When one said the "Harold McChamber sort of thing," it was sufficient. Whenever one American writer deplored in a serious American magazine the inferiority of all other American writers he almost always included Harold McChamber's novels among the things that made him sad, and in every article in the *Atlantic Monthly* on the commercial squalor of contemporary novelists Mr. McChamber's name was on the list of those whom money had depraved.

To read Harold McChamber was equivalent to saying "pants," tucking a napkin in the collar, vocalizing sneezes, vocalizing yawns, chewing gum, naming a child Gwendolen, having a popper and a mommer and a parlor with the "September Morn" hanging in it, and a husband who is always "he," a wife who is always "she," and children who always are the "little tots" or "kiddies."

Not that the people who read Harold McChamber necessarily did these things. On the contrary a great many of his readers were precisely of the class that would scorn them the most. But had their social discernment remained on the same level as their literary taste, as evidenced by this

liking for Harold McChamber they would have done these things and worse.

As to Mr. McChamber these critics would not admit that he might have fallen by accident to this low plane of vulgar entertainment, or that by natural abilities and inclination he might have simply gravitated to it. They clearly implied that Mr. McChamber had deliberately, guiltily descended to it, stopping his ears to the divine voices that bade him stay on high.

Now Mr. Harold McChamber, whom I may say, in passing, I have known intimately for many years, is the last man in the world to have had any such complication in his inner life. In writing his books he never passed consciously from a high plane to a low one, or stifled an artistic impulse or battled with his higher self or lowered his standard to suit the taste of other people.

The simple truth about Mr. McChamber is that his own taste and that of an enormous number of other people turned out to be just alike. He never had to study the people's demand, because he demanded what they did. He, too, liked Ruritanias at the same time that other people liked them and with real enthusiasm he made one. He, too, liked to read about a corrupt man who ran for office, so he made one run.

When people were fond of strong, primitive heroes in wild places, he, too, was fond of them.

He did not in a spirit of low commercial cunning compound those iron-backed creatures with four moral qualities and the love of nature in their souls. The call of the wild really called him also. And the democratic "urge" really did urge him when its turn came round, and as soon as religious unrest appeared in the magazines he, too, became religiously unrestful just in the nick of time.

Knowing Mr. McChamber personally, I deny absolutely that an attempt on his part to climb a high and steep artistic acclivity would have had any advantage whatsoever. It would have resulted in dislocation, not ascent. It is not true that the fidelity of the local color in *Sally of the Bogs* made it, from an artistic point of view, remarkable. The only remarkable thing about it was the thoroughness with which the local color was laid on. Reviewers at that time, hospitable to good intentions in that field, always mistook photography for description. It was their habit, too, to find signs of promise. Hardly any of their coming writers ever came. And that was the best that even this little group could say for him—that he was coming—whereas within a month after the publication of *Captain Bludstone,* Mr. McChambers received fifteen hundred letters from delighted readers who believed he had already come, and he had a keener pleasure in producing it.

"When I wrote *Sally,*" he said, "I toiled over

it; when I wrote *Bludstone* I really felt inspired." He said he could not get that scene between the hero and the wounded tiger out of his mind for days. He considered it as strong as anything he had ever written, except that one in *The Boiling Vat,* where the poor young man, with the square jaw and the honest grey eyes that seemed to look you through, faces the powerful president of the Big Three System and says just what he thinks of him, knowing that it will cost him his place and destroy his chance of marrying the president's daughter—slightly above the middle height, brown eyes with a glint of gold in them, color that came and went, tawny hair with a trick of straying over the tips of the delicate ears, a light carriage as if poised for flight, and a rippling laugh. In short, Mr. McChamber has never had to study the arts of popularity. He has what may be called a representative nature. I have seen in his morning's mail after a new novel letters from an ex-President, two Senators, two relatives of the Vanderbilt family, five elevator boys, two out of the forty immortals in our National Academy, and one brakeman on the Elevated Railway. And in achieving this he has never swerved a hair's breadth from the path of his literary inclinations. His mind spontaneously contains the very thoughts that would have been elected to it, had the people voted on its contents.

SUBSIDIZING AUTHORS

I have never been able to understand the reasoning of those kind-hearted people who from time to time recommend, seemingly in all seriousness, the subsidizing of the deserving poor among American authors. As a writer my mouth waters at the thought of it, but I cannot with a clear conscience urge it. One's humanity would be torn in two by the problem presented in its application. To clothe a naked author would be an act of personal kindness; it would also be, very likely, an act of public cruelty. If, for example, a committee of the Academy of Arts and Letters were to set out regularly to rescue all the mute, inglorious Miltons, the result while pleasing to the Miltons might be exceedingly disagreeable to everybody else owing to the committee's probable taste in Miltons. How do these wise men know that a committee for saving more authors from starvation would really be any better for the literary situation than a committee for causing more authors to starve, or that a committee for endowing authors to continue writing would work out more desirably than a committee that endowed them to stop?

I say committee, of course, because we always carry out by committee anything in which any one of us alone would be too reasonable to persist. Alone, after a few trials, one would probably come to his senses, but in a committee we come to one another's senses, which is merely a convivial manner of going out of our own. It is not that the plan looks merely to the preservation of an author as a man. It looks to his continuance as an author. Mad decisions of this sort could be taken only in committee.

It is different with other occupations. Toward bank-clerks, for instance, one could be coöperatively humane without endangering to any great extent the mental lives of other people. A "nation-wide" bank-clerk life-saving service would be no more invidious or unreasonable than many other civic bodies now existing, and it might perhaps with safety go further than simply pulling bank-clerks out of water and drying them. In might even take measures to aid them to return to bank-clerking. Even a committee could probably tell not only whether a bank-clerk ought to live but whether he ought to be a bank-clerk.

But suppose seven novelists, while looking for a democratic "urge," fall into the Harlem River, and are drawn out by some committee on the conservation of deserving fiction. Beyond the work of complete resuscitation the committee obviously

has no right to go. To restore those novelists warmed and comforted to their respective families, without regard to the quality of their literary work, is defensible on grounds of common humanity. It pertains to the preservation of human life. But one step beyond that point, one single measure for aiding and abetting any or all of them in the writing of novels would carry the committee into a subtle and dubious domain requiring fine, far-seeing discriminations such as no American committee on any subject has ever been known to possess. It pertains to the preservation of a literary life.

The bodies of those seven novelists, whirling in the tide underneath the arches of High Bridge, would be, I admit, a pathetic sight, no matter what they had written. But only so long as they were regarded merely as men. If they were regarded exclusively as novelists and from a strictly literary point of view, the occasion might be almost joyous. So little can one say in any long view of the matter whether their survival as active novelists would do more good than harm to the human spirit. One man's life may be dearly purchased at the price of ten thousand ennuis. I do not deny that the committee might do literature a service by hitting once and again on the right novelist to conserve; but so might a lightning-stroke by killing the right one. Why add one

blind chance to another in the hope of coming out straight in this rather delicate affair?

Or take a case which would seem to me wholly deserving and in which I ought certainly to sympathize with the subsidizing point of view. Having nearly finished my book on "The Religion of Inexperience," a constructive work in moral eradication, written with energy and vision, seizing posterity's thought by the forelock but transcending somewhat the mental powers of my contemporaries, I appear one morning with my six starving children at the Anne Street Headquarters of the Rockefeller Committee on Indoor Literary Relief. It turns out better than I could have hoped. Not only am I tided over my present difficulties, but three weeks later there is a meeting of two college presidents, a professor of sociology, a writer of a successful novel, an historian, and the director of a bank, and out of the confluence of these six intellects there comes, as indeed anything might come, a decision in my favor.

"The Religion of Inexperience" is achieved, published in four volumes, respectfully considered. I find people polite and not unwilling to admit that I may be passing on to posterity. As I have the reputation of writing over everybody's head, giants arise from time to time and say they understand me and from my own point of view and that of several others the world has gained a

great deal. Yet if I apply in an unselfish spirit the law of literary probabilities the odds seem to run the other way. The other things I might have done better are so numerous. At no stage of the whole affair, for example, has there been the slightest indication that God did not really mean me for a plumber or that that was not the true reason why I almost starved. Had I starved a little longer, I might in desperation or moved by some wayward impulse have begun to plumb, discovered a real passion and talent for the art, earned my own living by it instead of by puzzling people to no purpose, and so the ending would have been much happier all around. Misplacements of this sort are always occurring in letters, and committees do not readjust them.

We seem to be as much at sea in this matter as they were about 120 A.D., when the critic cursed the town for keeping alive so many poets and cursed it again for starving so many of them; wanted to know how a man could behold the horses of the chariot of the sun if he had to grub for a living, and wanted to drive most poets back to grubbing for a living as soon as he observed their manner of beholding the horses of the chariot of the sun; said you ought to fatten poets to make them sing, and became violently angry the moment a fat poet began singing; blamed a rich man for feeding a pet lion instead of sub-

sidizing some author at much less expense, and was all for feeding the author to the lion on reading what he wrote. He wanted authors protected, but the literary choices made by the protector almost drove him mad. Juvenal, of course, was wholly unreasonable, but his state of mind corresponded quite exactly to the confusion of the case, and the confusion is still with us. He had no solution but the lame one that Caesar should select and subsidize the author, and he had already completely damned the average Caesar. But Caesar certainly seemed to be just as good a solution as any of those modern monsters with five respectable pairs of legs under a round table; those headless decapods that we call upon nowadays as committees to do our dubious jobs.

INCORPORATED TASTE

When college commencement coma or old-alumni-sleeping-sickness stole over the senses at a meeting of the American Corporation of Letters not long ago, the audience had no just grounds for complaint.

No one of course had a right to expect that a meeting of so respectable a body would be either inflammatory or gay, and it may seem invidious to commemorate it here as an occasion of more than usual dullness. Yet the pulse and temperature of that dignified public body did seem a little subnormal, even from the standard of dignified bodies generally. How could that charming and impulsive writer so subdue the seductions of his own mind as to sink for the time being into an utter presiding officer? Why need that learned professor have read a literary paper prepared presumably by a member of the Sophomore class? And how could that busy public official contrive to give so strong an impression that nothing, absolutely nothing, was going on inside him?

Grant the necessity of every unimpeachable sentiment and every platitude. Allow for that

American platform change whereby an individual, clearly distinguishable in private life from the social scenery around him, melts, spreads out, is personally obliterated, coalesces with the homogeneous mass of leading citizens, irreproachable, featureless, placid, fluent, explanatory, and null. Still there are those who whisper that no man could so completely and for so long a time conceal his intellect, if he had one; that an active mind would surely at some moment kick the covering off. Decorum carried to a certain point breeds horrid passions in the human breast and the gentlest platitude pushed too far may drive men in the desperation of their ennui to deeds of inhumanity. That is a peril against which dignified civic and academic bodies would do well to guard on such occasons. These scenes of excessive public calm might breed a violence that would blow a perfectly innocent, middle-aged gentleman clean out of the wages of *Who's Who?*

That was the danger as I saw it and the only danger. Yet that was not at all the point of view from which the critics blamed it. This very meeting called forth strange rebukes. Some said it was fastidious, undemocratic; others that it made vile concessions to the public taste. There was no coherence in their remarks upon it but there was as usual an undercurrent of dislike. Whenever the annual meeting of the Corporation of Letters

comes around there is always an ardent hope that it will misbehave. The comment of clever outsiders is usually ironical. One is supposed to be amused every year when someone else refers to its members as "immortals," and if one can not annually make the same remark about people who take themselves too seriously, one must at least seem to take pleasure in hearing it. People proud of their sense of humor insist in precisely the same words each year that there is something funny about it, and if there is any falling off in the vivacity of your annual assent, they snub you.

Newspaper reporters attend each meeting of the Corporation of Letters in the hope that this time the members will appear in togas with bay leaves in their hair, or at least in court dress carrying swords. And although nothing of a broadly comic nature has ever occurred, the outward effect of this infant, and, to my mind, innocent institution, is still to set people to winking at one another once a year, without a word of explanation as to why they wink.

To be sure, you do hear comments from time to time on the taste shown by the Corporation in the selection of its members, but they are not especially significant. People are too familiar with the casualties of club membership to think that any group of men can add to their number reasonably. Strange creatures sift into any club. The

best of committees on admissions can no more exclude them altogether than the best of housekeepers can exclude house flies. There is always a certain number of club members who have bred from eggs laid in the walls or under the carpets; it is impossible that any one should have let them in on purpose.

Principles, standards, and the intelligence of the persons who make the choice, are no safeguards in this perilous domain. Had the nine muses been obliged, in committee, to nominate a tenth, luck would have had it that she should turn out an idiot. No reasonable person can blame the Corporation for a certain proportion of mishaps in membership.

As to the true source of this undercurrent of hostility, I can only make a guess. I should say that it springs from the feeling that the Corporation is itself a mistake, rather than that it sometimes makes one. The critics seem to think that any such institution in an English-speaking community would be likely to be made up of merely leading citizens, and they feel that from the point of view of everything essential to letters leading citizens are as a rule injurious. They believe it would always encourage what is respectable and never by any chance encourage what is more than respectable, and that respectability in letters is too much encouraged as it is. They think that when

art or literature achieves anything permanently desirable it is something that no committee of successful American citizens would have antecedently recommended or would be likely to discover afterwards inside of two generations from the date of its occurrence. To the chaos of public taste they believe it contributes only an element of pomposity leaving the chaos just where it was. In short, they loathe institutionalism in taste, having a horror not of standards, but of any corporation that would tell them what they are.

I may not do justice to this point of view because it is not one with which I sympathize, but I should imagine that the argument of its upholders would run about like this: There are two classes of literary and artistic workers: the transmuters and the transmitters. The transmuters are those whose minds leave an impression on what passes through them. They survive by a force that is elemental and beyond analysis, and often unpleasant to the most eminent of their contemporaries. They could no more be a poet laureate than could Shelley. They could no more get into an academy than could Flaubert. By eminent, shining, contemporary civic bodies they are usually left aside. An academy is an institution for honoring the people who could get along without it. An academy is always rich in members of the other type; that is to say, the transmitters.

These are the men who leave all things, both in art and in literature, precisely where they find them. They are of immediate social value for purposes of repetition. They are the active, industrious, socially blameless individuals, who write most of the books that are sold, hold most of the good positions, are the soonest known, and the soonest forgotten, being wholly of the substance of their hour and their place, and the majority in every institution.

In society these people may be useful as a ballast; in art they are always a dead weight. Band them together and you add one more to the already too large number of organizations for the suppression of human diversity. Suppose, they say, an academy had existed at the middle of the last century. By the time Longfellow was receiving more encouragement than he deserved it would have encouraged him still more. On the other hand, it would have discouraged Poe either negatively or positively. Very likely there would have been a fine row with Poe, and another sore spot carried to the grave by that unhappy mortal. Take it all in all, an academy organized for the deliberate purpose of discouraging all that a majority of its members most approved in contemporary literature would probably work out just as well as, or better than, the other kind. A learned body actuated by malevolence towards

literature has never been tried. Perhaps it might accomplish something.

All of which seems rather high-flown and inconsistent with the probable attitude of these critics in their daily lives. They are probably themselves members of some humdrum institution and are not worried lest it crush out brilliant eccentricity. Such a body has to do with letters, not as a divine calling, but as a profession wherein men earn their bread. It has to do with levels, and is not to blame for guessing wrong on peaks. People do not blame a university for withholding the degree of bachelor of arts from anybody but a prophet. University decisions are as a rule stupid, and universities muddle along on the whole usefully. A group of authors is of course a depressing sight, authors being too much alike as it is, but a grouping of authors is no more likely to snuff out a genius than a genius is to snuff out the group. It is moreover so analogous to other combinations that if a man set out to attack it, he would be involved in too vast a crusade. If one obeyed an impulse altogether artistic, one would go up and down the land pillaging.

BARBARIANS AND THE CRITIC

As I remember it, at the Athenian Club that evening there had been a meeting of our Committee on House Management in which the question of buying awnings for the north windows was debated from nine o'clock till half-past ten, when it was unanimously referred to a sub-committee without power consisting of the chairman, the treasurer and the secretary, who were to make recommendations at the next meeting.

Then came supper and after that Mr. Harbington Dish read a paper on American verse reform in which, while deprecating the radical views of certain writers, he insisted that the situation was very serious and that something ought to be done. I recall only two of his suggestions: First, that rhymes if retained at all in the new era that was now upon us should always be at the beginning and never at the end of the line; and, second, that the verse form once popular under the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy ought to be revived. There was much applause, but after it the meeting broke up rather suddenly, the members slipping away so quietly that Jarman and I who were seated in the

two big armchairs by the fire did not realize at first that we were alone.

"It's the worst thing he ever wrote," Jarman was saying about a writer of our acquaintance, "and it's by all odds the most successful—and not merely in sales, either. You should see his letters, from people really distinguished, people you'd never suppose would be taken in by it. And all that talk about his vision, keen social criticism, sense of the underlying forces of modern life, breadth, depth, audacity! Why the whole thing's nothing but a compilation of the ideas in the air, without a single individual, distinctive,——"

Jarman's feet were on the fender, precisely in my line of vision and I remember noticing that he wore tan shoes. I closed my eyes for a few moments and when I opened them again the shoes had changed to a kind of bath-slippers and as I glanced up I saw he was now clothed in a thin, white, sleeveless garment of strange cut.

"Why Jarman, what in the world——" said I.

"Mr. Jarman went out ten minutes ago," said the person in white, in a low-pitched voice, and at the same time bent forward, revealing a swarthy wrinkled face, with prominent curved nose, and dark eyes of extraordinary brilliance—a man over sixty-five, I should say, lean but vigorous.

"May I ask to whom I have the pleasure"—

said I, edging my chair to a point from which I could reach the fire-tongs if necessary.

"The man of Aquinum," he said "*the* Aquinas, not that upstart Christian dog, Thomas, I believe you call him. What right has that corruptor of my own tongue to the name of my own birthplace when my claim is prior to his by eleven centuries? But that's the justice of you barbarians to an honest man of letters. Who was *the* Aquinas for a thousand years before the jargon of the tiresome Thomas was ever read by anybody, I'd like to know. Just answer me that."

"I am not acquainted in Aquinum," I said, "and I am sorry to say I know nothing about the Aquinas family, but perhaps if you mention your entire name——"

"Oh, well," said he, "if your modern thoughts can travel back any further than last week Wednesday, perhaps you will recall one D. Junius Juvenalis."

"Juvenal?" said I. "Why, yes; it was you, wasn't it, who said children should be treated with the greatest reverence and then wrote a lot of things that had to be cut out of every edition that was likely to fall into the hands of young people. Oh, and let me see, there was Dr. Johnson's poem *London* and the one on Vanity, and "Slow rises worth by poverty oppressed" and that sort of thing. You're in the dictionaries of

familiar quotations—nearly half a page. I always get you mixed up with Oliver Goldsmith, I don't know why; but I believe people generally do get you mixed up with somebody else. If you will pardon my saying so, I think the prevailing impression of you at present is rather indistinct, and still fading perhaps, especially here—the war, you know, and electricity, aviation, submarines, motion pictures, breathless progress of the social sciences, new education, new woman, new poetry, the referendum and recall, world federation, eugenics, the rights of labor, and the democratic push. It seems rather an unfortunate time to choose for spending your—your outing, if I may call it that. I should have supposed that Oxford in 1760, say, would have been about the latest occasion. In short you will find us, I fear, a little distrait, forgetful——"

"Be quiet for a little while, barbarian, and I will try to explain. It is precisely because I am not forgotten that I am here. My name, of course, is seldom mentioned and I have not heard for fifty years a correct quotation of any of my words, but my thoughts go on among you. They go on damnably. It is not for the pleasure of meeting them that I am come. Quite the contrary. I am sent back here in punishment like other poets that have sinned. Race hatred was my undoing. I called it my Roman patriotism, and I cursed those

absurd Hebrews and the 'esurient Greekling' and those outlandish Egyptians and sneered at the Gauls and railed at all those ill-bred Eastern fellows that overran the town, and I felt quite virtuous in doing so. And for helping to perpetuate the great race lie and the geographical inhumanities which are still your curse, I am damned to revisit my own thoughts as they float about in the world through the ages, the same old thoughts, dressed up in barbarous foolish phrases, passed from one silly mouth to another, turned into tinkling rhymes by the worst series of imitators that ever a man had—

> Let observation with extensive view
> Survey mankind from China to Peru.

Great poetry, that! That man Johnson had no word-sense. I never said anything of the sort. What I said was

> Omnibus in terris quae sunt a Gadibus—"

"Wait a minute," said I, "I don't quite—"

"Well, what I said didn't sound in the least like his pedantic, mincing, repetitious stuff, or Dryden's either for that matter, or Chapman's or that series of Oxford dons. Why can't they let me alone? That's the curse of my thoughts. They are never forgotten. Not a day passes without some one's spinning them out in a literary essay

for a magazine all about the discerning few and the undiscerning rabble or in tedious conversation at some club, like yours. Take, for instance, the talk of your critical friend, Jarmanus, what's his name, about the mean rewards of merit and the triumph of mediocrity. You'll find the whole of it in Sat. VII, line 9 to 99—

> Qui nihil expositum soleat deducere, nec qui
> Communi feriat—"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted, "but please don't talk Yiddish or whatever it is. I am a modern New York man and I agree with our most progressive educators that any classic sentiment which cannot be adequately expressed in the English language is not worth reading. You were saying?"

"I was merely repeating something I said about the best selling fiction of my day. I thought I had put it rather better and more compactly than your Mr. Jarman did or that man in the *Atlantic Monthly* a while ago who spread four sentences of mine over eight pages, or any of the fifteen others within the last six months. Is there ever a moment when commercialism is not being lamented by your cultured critic of the day, who in a literary sense is no wise distinguishable from your cultured critic of the day before? Writing on this theme, they are as like as the white sow's litter, and I have to read them all. By the Great Girl's bow and quiver, by the salsipotent fork, by

the javelin of the Wise Lady, by the Cirrhæan spikes, by the boiled head of my own baby served in Egyptian vinegar, I curse the whole insanable cacoëthical cohort of scriptitating——"

"Hold on! What—what's the matter?"

"I was just thinking that I should have to read in the next number of the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Nineteenth Century* the self-same things, only ill expressed, that I said to Umbricius at the Capene arch that evening in the summer, I think, of 120, when he was moving his furniture out of town. Queer that I who wrote *Occidit miseros crambe repetita*——"

"There you go again."

"I say it's queer that I of all people should be condemned throughout all time to stuff myself with the warmed-over cabbage of my own commonplace. I didn't mind coming back for Shakespeare when he stole that thing about 'Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay,' but I haven't had an afternoon in Hades since Matthew Arnold wrote about Philistines, and nowadays with every dull person writing about the money-god there is no rest. Why, once when I hoped to pass the week-end in Hell I was called back to read Mr. Upton Sinclair on the sin of paying a thousand dollars for a toothbrush—a matter which I had settled finally in *Sed plures nimia congesta*——"

"Please don't *do* that."

"And what with the constant reappearance of my ideas on mothers-in-law, the newly rich, success, waste, show, luxury, gambling, graft, the social climber, divorce, woman from the point of view of the anti-suffragist, woman as the target for brightly cynical remarks, alcoholism, prostitution, country life, subsidization of authors, high cost of living and forty other burning modern questions, it looks as if I should never—. And the hideous uniformity of your vapid writers in their common delineation of our thoughts; the large wastes of identical language. Forty novels in a row with the thoughts all dating from the reign of Domitian and all expressed alike. Belles-lettres produced by machinery. But though the monotony of the modern manner is terrible, that is not the worst of it. What I can't stand is the stench—"

"Stench?" I asked.

"Smell of decaying reputations. Nothing worse to a fairly immortal nose than the smell of a passing modern reputation. Impossible to stay within a mile of your national capital, and the literary people are almost as bad. I tried to drop in on a group of Imagist poets on my way here just now, but I nearly fainted."

"I hope," said I, drawing my chair away, "*I* haven't been too—"

"Oh, no, not you. That's why I chose you in-

stead of a celebrity. People without any reputation to decay are comparatively odorless."

At that moment the room turned upside down and spilled him out of it and I was tossing about in space till I heard Jarman say, "I've been shaking you for fully five minutes. If you want to catch the 1:32, you'll have to hurry."

REVIEWER'S CRAMP

One would think that the most dogged of fireside defenders would be satisfied with the moral purport of a novel that I read some years ago. Nearly all the characters in it who offend against the marriage bond—and there are quite a lot of them—come to a bad end. In fact, in the interest of literary variety it would seem that sudden death, delirium, blasted hopes, social perdition, and the wages of sin in one form or another were distributed with an almost too perfect moral precision. From the birth of the first illegitimate infant in an early chapter down to the moment in the final pages when the last illicit lover has his skull crushed in, the mills of God are made to grind in a manner that ought seriously to discourage the carnally minded. Yet instantly there were many commentators who denounced the book as dissolute.

One of them said he was shocked by the "deliberate devotion of such a pen as the author's to the defiance of the social conventions and ideas of duty and morality." Another wanted to know how "parents and guardians can prevent young people from reading such horrid low class tales."

They called it "dangerous" and "depraved." They said that the author had set out malevolently to "undermine all respect for marriage and parenthood."

Why reviewers pick out certain books as dangerous is one of the mysteries of literary journalism. You can no more tell what will frighten reviewers than what a horse will shy at. A reviewer will pass the same familiar object twenty times and then of a sudden rear at the sight of it as in the presence of a monster never before beheld. If one could gather all the books and plays denounced as dangerous in the last twenty years, what a splendid object lesson it would be in the inutility of moral apprehension. Even so sensitive a moral being as a New York City politician probably would not seek to suppress to-day another "Mrs. Warren's Profession."

Reviewers are of course aware of this when they stop to think of it. Every reviewer really knew that all the ideas, situations, and emotions presented in that novel had been thumbed and dog-eared in nearly every circulating library for a generation. For as a matter of fact it was about the most conventional book that the author had ever written and it seemed almost a compilation from the fiction of our time. The homes that it could undermine must all have been long since blasted.

Perhaps it is due to temporary loss of memory, whereby one modern novel suddenly looms up to the reviewer's mind, alone and terrible, devoid of relation to any other modern novel in the world. Perhaps if you had forgotten completely what a modern novelist was like, the sight of one would be shocking. Even Mr. Harold McChamber might seem peculiar if encountered by a mind entirely blank. Or it may be that certain reviewers are constrained at intervals to utter moral noises without regard to the occasion, just as a watch-dog will sometimes bark at a wheelbarrow, not because there is danger in the wheel-barrow, but because there is bark in the dog. Perhaps the re viewers above quoted could not have held in at that moment no matter what novelist had passed by and it happened to be this one. Neither he nor they were really to blame for it. They fidgetted merely because they felt fidgety and long months followed in which, with Arnold Bennett up to something passionate, H. G. Wells at his wickedest, Bernard Shaw in eruption, new bad words coming out in each installment of the Oxford Dictionary, and the air thick with volumes of the most terribly lucid sexual explanations, they faced equally grave moral perils with entire composure. Then just as you were dozing off over some quite ordinary bedside compound of matrimonial miscalculations and rebellious hearts, they would ring

out the wild alarm again—seized by the same old unaccountable spasm over the duality of the two sexes, and the usualness of the usual novel, and and the contemporaneousness of their contemporaries.

I believe, however, I can offer a better explanation based on my personal experience as a reviewer. Such seizures as the one above mentioned and they often take widely different forms, are the result, I think, of reviewer's cramp.

At all events I myself, after reviewing books for five years, was obliged to desist on account of reviewer's cramp. I may say for the enlightenment of those who are not familiar with the malady that it is purely mental, having none of the physical symptoms of the nervous affection which sometimes jerks a writer's pen-hand in the air. My hand was not jerked in the air, but my mind was, and from that time to this I have never started to write a review that my mind did not immediately fly away from it and rivet itself on something else; and when detached with difficulty from that particular object it would rivet itself on another, equally remote from the review. It is no mere lack of interest in writing a review, for that might be overcome—is overcome daily and hourly—and besides you see reviews being written everywhere by people who obviously could have had no interest in writing them. It

is the passionate interest in something else that constitutes the gravity of my case—the more so because the things that then awaken it do not normally attract me. I have been enchanted for a long time by an ordinary penwiper from the moment of starting to write a review. When a bee has entered the room, although I am not in the least entomological in my inclinations, I have become a Fabre.

Recently I gave the thing one more trial, thinking that after a long interval the condition might have passed. I took five novels that had entertained me and determined to stir them all together in four or five pleasant pages round the central notion that, after all, each showed in one way or another the tendency of the contemporary novel to be contemporary, in spite of the fact that from the pages of one you would not know that the war had existed and from the pages of another you would see plainly that but for the war the book would not exist. I should express surprise at a writer who showed no traces of the war, but I should admit that he was nevertheless contemporary. I read dozens of those articles every month; I like them; and I started to make one. This time it was sealing-wax. I rolled six balls of sealing-wax, making them rounder and rounder. It is wonderful how round you can make balls of sealing-wax, if you give your whole soul to it.

Most reviewers sooner or later have some form of reviewer's cramp, but the victim of my form of it is not only permanently disabled; he is under the illusion of righteousness. He believes he is justified in behaving in that way. Not only that, but he believes other reviewers ought to behave as he does. I felt nobler after rolling those wax balls than I should have felt after writing the review, and so far as I have read the reviews of those novels, I believe almost every writer if he had applied himself to sealing-wax instead would be feeling nobler too. For I cannot believe that they meant a word they said or that they wanted to say it—I mean in regard to the quality of the books, not of course their mere outlines of the stories.

I cannot believe, for example, that a man perhaps fifty years of age and a reviewer of novels by the hundred can become ecstatic often. I believe he will go a whole year at his occupation without being ecstatic once. I do not believe that after reading Miss Fanny Wilson's *Apple Blossoms,* he meant any one of the following words: "From her seasoned but joyous throat the old melody ripples forth fresh and free, full of delicious whims and sly laughter, reminiscent of the *Vie de Boheme.*" I insist also that those five reviewers, each of whom implied that on reading the *The Torment* he was shaken like a reed by the

wind knew perfectly well either that he was not shaking at all or that he was making himself shake.

Nothing stood out from the general situation as they implied that it did in all of these reviews. In short, these reviewers were subdued to the iron law of reviewing, and this iron law ordains that reviewing shall be the perpetual announcement of differences that are not perceived and of astonishments for good or for evil that are not experienced, and that it shall be accompanied by a constrained silence as to the sense of monotony that undoubtedly always pervades the reviewer's bosom. There is stiff compulsion in it. Such things could not happen in a free and private life.

If, for example, a man in private life had for one day a purée of beans, and the next day haricots verts, and then in daily succession bean soup, bean salad, butter beans, lima, black, navy, Boston baked, and kidney beans, and then back to purée and all over again, he would not be in the relation of the general eater to food or in the relation of the general reader to books. But he would be in the relation of the general reviewer toward novels. He would soon perceive that the relation was neither normal nor desirable, and he would take measures, violent if need be, to change it. He would not say of the haricots verts when they came round again that they were quite in

the vein of the *Vie de Bohême* but ever fresh and free, and he would not say on his navy bean day that they were as brisk and stirring little beans of the sea as he could recall in his recent eating. He would say grimly, Beans again, and he would take prompt steps to intermit this abominable precession of bean dishes, however diversely they were contrived.

If change for any reason were impossible—if owing to a tyrant wife and the presence of a monomaniac in the kitchen we could imagine him constrained to an indefinite continuance,—then he would either conceive a personal hatred toward all beans that would make him unjust to any bean however meritorious, or he would acquire a mad indiscriminateness of acquiescence and any bean might please. And his judgment would be in either case an unsafe guide for general eaters.

This I believe is what happens to almost all reviewers of fiction after a certain time, and it accounts satisfactorily for various phenomena that are often attributed to a baser cause. It is the custom at certain intervals to denounce reviewers for their motives. They are called venal and they are called cowardly by turns. They are blamed for having low standards or no standards at all and for not having the slightest sense of anything of a permanent value in literature, and for using the language of the advertising page.

I think their defects are due chiefly to the nature of their calling; that they suffer from an occupational disease.

I do not see why they should be blamed for not applying to their contemporaries a scale based on the permanent values of literature. They are not engaged in an occupation that admits of such a thing. No one in their situation could judge fairly his contemporaries, even if it be assumed that contemporaries can ever be fairly judged. They are wedged in so tight with contemporary minds that they cannot even get a square look at them. But they persist in employing words that imply a permanent value in some merely momentary thing and they mislead a general reader, who, as he is not devouring current fiction in such quantities as they are, has more space in his thoughts for perspective. Hence they always seem in any proportionate view of the thing profuse and niggardly by turns—arms out to-day to a Mr. Merrick or a Mr. Walpole, backs turned perhaps to-morrow on some poor American, just as good as they, who is naturally thinking, How about me? They are to blame rather for misusing the words of literary criticism. In the circumstances they should not be used at all. It is a journalistic subject and requires a journalistic treatment, but there is such a fidgetting with literary terms that somehow they always mislead you.

It is not speaking ill of fiction of this class to call it merely journalism, as critics for a generation past have been doing; it is speaking well of journalism. It has a wider liberty than other kinds of journalism and a somewhat longer hold, but it does not last long and what is more, the makers of it do not expect it to last long. Essentially it is on the exact level of dozens of respectable periodicals, as everybody concerned in it or about it is aware. Yet reviewers who never speak of the appearance of the last month's magazines with any literary emotion, will report almost any novel as a literary event, or condemn it because it is not one. It seems as if they might avoid extremes in the one case as well as in the other. Surely this situation has lasted long enough for familiarity to supervene. If I saw a man while reading the London *Spectator* fall from his chair in a fit of laughter, if I saw some elderly gentleman throw the *Atlantic Monthly* up in the air with shouts of joy, I should suppose of course that each of them was out of his mind. When reviewers of fiction behave as they constantly do in this same manner over events that are no whit more significant, it is not necessary, perhaps, to take so serious a view of their condition of mind; but it is natural to suppose that they are the unconscious victims of the malady that I have described.

HOW TO HATE SHAKESPEARE

When I read M. Georges Pellissier's book on Shakespeare some years ago I could not see why he should have lashed himself to Shakespeare in that hostile intimacy. Probably no other English poet could have been found, except perhaps Browning, who would so essentially offend his modern, Gallic intelligence, and one would think M. Pellissier, after yawning through a half-dozen of the plays, would have smiled or cursed according as his impulse prompted, and thrown the rest of them away. Instead of that he dragged his incompatible mind not only through the whole length of Shakespeare's dramas, but over a large area of the dullest Shakespearean criticism as well. It seemed heroic but singularly unnecessary. It was as if, on meeting a woman whom he particularly disliked, he had straightway married her and then taken notes for the next ten years in corroboration of his disagreeable first impressions. Never was a man more diligent in the accumulation of ennui. He turned the plays inside out for evil instances and he gathered them

in awful heaps—bad puns, platitudes, pleonasms, contradictions, incoherencies, bombast, mixed metaphors, and bungled plots—in short, every fault of style, structure, character analysis or moral teaching that a life-long, conscientious hater of the bard could lay his hands on—and as they were all rendered in perfectly commonplace modern French, they presented a sorry spectacle. It was as honest and thorough a job in damnation as had been done in many a year, and for that reason very interesting. Any one who really hated a poet could find there an admirable illustration of the way to go about it.

First of all there were the outrageous liberties which Shakespeare takes with the sacred unities of time and place and action. M. Pellissier professed to be more liberal than Aristotle in that matter, but his nerves went all to pieces amidst the riotings of Shakespeare. Why, there are seven changes of place in the second act of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," and six in the first act of "Coriolanus," and thirteen in the third act of "Antony and Cleopatra," ranging over three continents, all that was then known of the surface of the globe! And as to time, in some plays the action is supposed to run for years, which is manifestly incredible, while in others it is telescoped into so tight a compass that villainy has no chance to germinate or passion to expand.

How is a character to develop in three hours? How could the events of "Measure for Measure" squeeze themselves into a week? Fancy M. Hervieu doing such a thing, or Donnay, Mirbeau, Brieux, Capus, or even Rostand. Macbeth could not have become so ambitious as he was in four days, or Othello so jealous. In "The Tempest" Prospero puts Ferdinand to the trial by making him carry logs and finally releases him and rewards him with the hand of Miranda in these words:

> All thy vexations
> Were but my trials of thy love, and thou
> Hast strangely stood the test. . . .
> Then, as my gift, and thine own acquisition
> Worthily purchased, take my daughter—

But says M. Pellissier, watch in hand, how long has Ferdinand actually been at this log business? He did not lift a single log till after the close of the first act, and he left off logging immediately before the beginning of the fourth. Thus his logging activities could have lasted no more than a single hour! Considering what the Charity Organization demands of a tramp in return for a night's lodging, Ferdinand was grossly overpaid.

Although he found the logs very heavy, would an hour of that work suffice, as his father-in-law said, for the "worthy purchase" of Miranda?

The matter seemed all the more unpardonable when Prospero's lines were rendered in such words as these—

Les tourments que je t'ai infligés devaient éprouver ton amour; tu les as merveilleusement supportés, etc.

On the other hand, the action of the "Winter's Tale" skips sixteen years and the figure of Time appears on the stage and "without any scruple" tells the audience what has happened. Yet in this very play Shakespeare rushes the King into a jealous fit more suddenly than M. Pellissier has ever seen a jealous fit come on.

Then many of the plays tell several stories at once. "Cymbeline" tells three, and so does "The Taming of the Shrew;" "King Lear" tells not only the tale of the old King betrayed by his daughters, but that of Gloucester betrayed by his son; "Timon of Athens" breaks off when it is about half-way through, and takes Alcibiades for its new hero; "The Merchant of Venice" spins two yarns which essentially have nothing in common.

So M. Pellissier ran on, with mounting indignation.

And in "The Merchant of Venice" Shakespeare does not even respect the rules of simple arithmetic, for when Jessica tells Portia that she has overheard Shylock say that he loves the pound of

Antonio's flesh more than twenty times three thousand ducats, Portia offers at first to pay him six thousand ducats, and later says she will double it if necessary and even triple that result. But says Pellissier, this is by no means the right amount. "Twenty times the sum due is sixty thousand ducats, and 6,000 x 2 x 3, is only thirty-six thousand, a little more than half." He finds "The Merchant of Venice," indeed, very objectionable from almost every point of view: Its moral teachings are bad, as when Bassanio wins Portia's hand in the casket test, though he deserved no better than either of the other suitors; it tells two stories instead of one; and above all it drags along through an utterly worthless fifth act, when a few words added to the fourth would have supplied all that was necessary. The fact that this same worthless fifth act contains some of the finest and most familiar lines in all Shakespeare's writings does not concern him, if indeed he ever observed it. Punctuality, not poetry, is the thing.

He is shocked by the shameful waste of time on light characters and hates all those non-essential clowns, court fools, pedants, drunkards, thieves, eccentrics. What is the use of Dogberry and Verges? We find them first giving their tiresome instructions to their men; again, when they make their report to the governor, who is naturally

much irritated by their *sottise;* again, in prison, questioning the accused; again before the governor; and once more after that. Even if these "two stupid police officers" were as amusing as Shakespeare probably thought them, they would still be absolutely useless; but as a matter of fact they are dull buffoons fit only for a vulgar street show. And what a waste of time are the fooleries of Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Touchstone, Lancelot Gobbo, Speed, Lance, Bottom, the Dromios, Poor Tom, the grave-diggers and players in "Hamlet," Mercutio, Trinculo, Stephano, and the rest. Like Mr. Bernard Shaw, he has an especial aversion for the melancholy Jaques—

JAQUES. I'll give you a verse to this note, that I made yesterday in despite of my invention.

AMIENS. And I'll sing it.

JAQUES. Thus it goes:

If it do come to pass
That any man turn ass,
Leaving his wealth and ease
A stubborn will to please.

Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame.
Here shall he see
Gross fools as he,
And if he will come to me.

AMIENS. What's that "Ducdame"?

JAQUES. 'Tis a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle. I'll go sleep if I can; if I cannot, I'll rail against all the first-born of Egypt.

What philosophy is there in this? asks M. Pellissier.

From these citations I think it will be plain to anyone who at any period of his life has found pleasure in reading Shakespeare that M. Pellissier has by an accident of birth been for ever debarred from sharing in it. Therein he resembles the Shakespeare commentators. To him, as to the commentator, Shakespeare is not a source of pleasure, but a task. Among us common, careless folk, Shakespeare is not necessarily a sad matter, but on the strange assiduous tribe who live in footnotes he has laid a cruel burden. Nothing can persuade a layman that the Shakespeare scholars are not men who privately loathe Shakespeare. Otherwise, why their amazing marginal irrelevancies?

Act I., Sc. II., Line 20, Note 56. *"Biting."* Often used metaphorically by Shakespeare. So of *"nipping."* Cf. "a nipping and an eager air."

They write their notes, like schoolboys marking up their text-books' margins. In Shakespeare's company and longing for escape, they pass the time in queer, superfluous labors, memory exploits,

and verbal divagations, sometimes quoting all the passages that resemble a little the one in hand, sometimes all the lines they can think of that do not at all resemble it, not knowing what to do, yet bound to seem busy, hence elucidating, collating, emending, bickering with some other commentator fifty years dead, expounding prepositions, expounding anything, merely to relieve the awful tedium of being alone with Shakespeare. Hating poetry, they collect adverbs, or explain discrepancies in the time of day, or quote the moral reflections of some tired predecessor. I have seen a sentiment from Dr. Johnson which no free-born Anglo-American reader would remember for five minutes hoarded by these forlorn sub-Shakespearean crustacea for five generations. And they are under no compulsion. That is what puzzles every care-free person—why this especially unsympathetic class of men should have ever gone into the business at all, when there are chess, stamp-collecting, autographs, numismatics, golf, peace movements, book-plates, gardening, pressed flowers, social welfare work, taxidermy, solitaire —so many perfectly respectable occupations, at a safe distance from the hated bard.

And the best thing in M. Pellissier's book is the vengeance it takes on them. The same sort of reasons that they have hypocritically presented for a hundred years as ground for loving Shakes-

peare are here presented with greater force as ground for hating him. So he strips the mask from the other unimaginative scholars who preceded him and reveals their sullen faces.

CONFESSIONS OF A GALLOMANIAC

I have no idea what Mr. George Moore meant by saying in one of his literary discussions that Americans write better than Englishmen because they are safer from French influence. It seems quite obvious to me that Americans write worse than Englishmen, and that one of the reasons for it is that they are under English influence. Perhaps if they went by way of France there might be a chance of their escape from the prolonged colonialism of American letters and there would at least be the benefit of variety. Our writers are a timid people, like the conies, and in all probability they would still be imitating something but they would at least be imitating something further off. I could pick out twelve rather important American novelists on whom the experiment could have been tried without the least danger to current literature. And take the case of Mr. George Moore himself. Having but little power of self-analysis he would probably not know what had been best for him, but even he would hardly wish to have escaped his French experience. He is better, not worse, for his resemblance to Flaubert.

Not to imply that he has taken Flaubert as a model; I do not even know whether he has given him a thought; but his style in English is the precise equivalent of Flaubert's—delicate, flexible, inevitable. One may not like what Mr. George Moore says but one cannot easily imagine, especially in his earlier novels, that there could be any other way of saying it. That, I believe, is a French and not an English characteristic.

However, I am not concerned here with the training of Mr. George Moore or with the redemption of American novelists, but with my own small affairs. How to expose myself sufficiently to that same French influence which he considered so disastrous to the English language had been my problem during the entire period of the war. Down to the outbreak of the war I had no more desire to converse with a Frenchman in his own language than with a modern Greek. I thought I understood French well enough for my own purposes, because I had read it off and on for twenty years, but when the war aroused sympathies and sharpened curiosities that I had not felt before, I realized the width of the chasm that cut me off from what I wished to feel. Nor could it be bridged by any of the academic, natural, or commercial methods that I knew of. They were were either too slow or they led in directions that I did not wish to go. I had not the slightest de-

sire to call taxis, buy tickets, check trunks and board sleeping-cars all through Europe, since I doubted if I should go there. Neither did I wish to draw elaborate comparisons at some boarding-house table between Central Park and the Bois de Boulogne. I tried a phonograph, and after many bouts with it I acquired part of a sermon by Bossuet and real fluency in discussing a quinsy sore throat with a Paris physician, in case I ever went there and had one. I took fourteen conversation lessons from Mme. Carnet, and being rather well on in years at the start, I should, if I had kept on diligently, be able at the age of eighty-five to inquire faultlessly my way to the post-office. I could already ask for butter and sing a song written by Henry IV—when my teacher went to France to take care of her half-brother's children by his second wife, their father having been killed in the trenches. I will say this for Mme Carnet. I came to understand perfectly the French for all her personal and family affairs. No human being has ever confided in me so abundantly as she did. No human being has ever so sternly repressed any answering confidences of my own. Her method of instruction, if it was one, was that of jealous, relentless, unbridled soliloquy.

Thrown on the world with no power of sustaining a conversation on any other subject than the members of the Carnet family, I nevertheless re-

solved to take no more lessons but to hunt down French people and make them talk. What I really needed was a governess to take me to and from my office and into the park at noon, but at my age that was out of the question. Then began a career of hypocritical benevolence. I scraped acquaintance with every Frenchman whom I heard talking English very badly, and I became immensely interested in his welfare. I formed the habit of introducing visiting Frenchmen to French-speaking Americans and sitting, with open mouth, in the flow of their conversation. Then I fell in with M. Bernou, the commissioner who was over here buying guns and whose English and my French were so much alike that we agreed to interchange them. We met daily for two weeks and walked for an hour in the park, each tearing at the other's language. Our conversations, as I look back on them, must have run about like this:

"It calls to walk," said he, smiling brilliantly.

"It is good morning," said I, "better than I had extended."

"I was at you yestairday ze morning, but I deed not find."

"I was obliged to leap early," said I, "and I was busy standing up straight all around the forenoon."

"The book I prayed you send, he came, and I thank, but positively are you not deranged?"

"Don't talk," said I. "Never talk again. It was

really nothing anywhere. I had been very happy, I reassure."

"Pardon, I glide, I glode. There was the hide of a banane. Did I crash you?"

"I noticed no insults," I replied. "You merely gnawed my arm."

Gestures and smiles of perfect understanding.

I do not know whether Bernou, who like myself was middle-aged, felt as I did on these occasions, but by the suppression of every thought that I could not express in my childish vocabulary, I came to feel exactly like a child. They said I ought to think in French and I tried to do so, but thinking in French when there is so little French to think with, divests the mind of its acquisitions of forty years. Experience slips away for there are not words enough to lay hold of it, and the soul is bounded by the present tense. The exigencies of the concrete and the immediate were so pressing that reflection had no chance. Knowledge of good and evil did not exist; the sins had no names; and the mind under its linguistic limitations was like a rather defective toy Noah's ark. From the point of view of Bernou's and my vocabulary, Central Park was as the Garden of Eden after six months—new and unnamed things everywhere. A dog, a tree, a statue, taxed all our powers of description, and on a complex matter like a policeman our minds could not meet at all.

We could only totter together a few steps in any mental direction, but there was a real pleasure in this earnest interchange of insipidities and they were highly valued on each side. For my part I shall always like Bernou, and feel toward him as my childhood's friend, and I hope, when we meet again, I at sixty, he at fifty-five, we may stand together on a bridge and pluck the petals from a daisy and count them as they fall into the river, he in English, I in French. I wonder if Bernou noticed that I was an old, battered man, bothered with a tiresome profession. I certainly never suspected that he was. His language utterly failed to give me that impression.

Why should Seneca say it is an utterly ridiculous and disgraceful thing to be an elementary old man? Unless a man, as he grows old, gains his second simplicity, he is either already dead or damned. There is but one right passion for advancing years and that is curiosity, and curiosity implies the acceptance of one's mental inferiority toward an insect, toward a language, toward a man. Curiosity is never gratified in conversations as I hear them at my club or as I recall them at successful dinner-parties, long since mercifully gone by. Talk among respectable middle-aged New Yorkers is either an alternate pelting with opinions or a competitive endeavor to shine. When old Foggs, throwing down his newspaper,

bears down on me with his views on labor unions, which I have known for seven years, it is not from any wish to talk with me. He regards me as his mental pocket-handkerchief. In revenge I blow my views of Wilson on him and off he goes. Each of us really hates to receive all that the other has to give him. After conversing thirty years in New York in the English language, I have found that, if I am to preserve an interest in my species, I must begin again in another tongue. One must begin again at something in middle life, back in the woods, back on the farm or in the garden, or down at the bottom of the French language. Otherwise one will fall among those dreadful and anachronistic fogies; galvanized spectators of sports they cannot share in; trailers of youth to whom they are a nuisance; ever freshly Harvard or freshly Yale. Seneca was true to his theory of sophistication to the end, and so very properly bled himself to death in the bathtub.

After I lost Bernou I fastened upon an unfrocked priest who had come over here and gone into the shoe trade, a small, foxy man, who regarded me, I think, in the light of an aggressor. He wanted to become completely American and forget France, and as I was trying to reverse the process, I rather got in his way. He could talk of mediaeval liturgies and his present occupation, but nothing in between, and as he spoke English

very well, his practical mind revolted at the use of a medium of communication in which one of us almost strangled when there was another available in which we both were at ease. I could not pump much French out of him. He would burst into English rather resentfully. Then I took to the streets at lunch-time and tried newsdealers, book-shops, restaurants, invented imaginary errands, bought things that I did not want, and exchanged them for objects even less desirable. That kept a little conversation going day by day, but on the whole it was a dry season. It is a strange thing. There are more than thirty thousand of them in the city of New York, and I had always heard that the French are a clannish folk and hate to learn another language, but most of my overtures in French brought only English upon me. The more pains I took the more desirable it seemed to them that I should be spared the trouble of continuing. I could not explain the situation. I was always diving into French and they were always pulling me out again. They thought they were humane.

After all, hunting down French people in the city of New York who spoke English worse than I spoke French, was as good an exercise as golf, and it took less time. One reason why a good deal of skill is required is because they hate broken French worse than most of us hate broken English. Then there is of course that natural instinct to

alleviate apparently needless suffering, and my object was to stave off rescue as long as possible. When dragged out into the light of English I tried to talk just as foolishly in order that they might think it was not really my French that was the matter with me. Sometimes that worked quite well. Finding me just as idiotic in my own language they went back to theirs. It certainly worked well with my friend M. Bartet, a paralytic tobacconist in the West Thirties near the river, to whom my relation was for several months that of a grandchild, though, I believe we were of the same age. He tried to form my character by bringing me up on such praiseworthy episodes of his early life as he thought I was able to grasp.

Now at the end of a long year of these persistent puerilities I am able to report two definite results: In the first place a sense of my incapacity and ignorance infinitely vaster than when I began, and in the second a profound distrust, possibly vindictive in its origin, of all Americans in the city of New York who profess an acquaintance with French culture, including teachers, critics, theater audiences, lecture audiences and patronesses of visiting Frenchmen.

It was perhaps true, as people said at the time, that a certain French theatrical experiment in New York could not continue for the simple reason that it was too good a thing for the theatre-going

public to support. It may be that the precise equivalent of the enterprise, even if not hampered by a foreign language, could not have permanently endured. Yet from what I saw of its audiences, critics, enthusiasts, and from what I know of the American Gallophile generally, including myself, I believe the linguistic obstacle to have been more serious than they would have us suppose—serious enough to account for the situation without dragging in our aesthetic incapacity. It was certainly an obstacle that less than one-half of any audience ever succeeded in surmounting.

I do not mean that the rest of the audience got nothing out of it, for so expressive were the players by other means than words, that they often sketched the play out in pantomime. The physical activities of the troupe did not arise, as some of the critics declared, from the vivacity of the Gallic temperament; nor were they assumed, as others believed, because in the seventeenth century French actors had been acrobats. These somewhat exaggerated gestures were occasioned by the perception that the majority of the spectators were beginners in French. They were supplied by these ever-tactful people as a running translation for a large body of self-improving Americans.

But while no doubt almost everybody caught, as he would have said, the gist of the thing, though not quite understanding all the words, very few,

I believe, were in any condition to judge of the play as a play. This seemed particularly true when reading the published commentaries. The players deserved all the eulogies they received, but if they could have beheld the inner state of the eulogists they would not have felt in the slightest degree buoyed up.

La Fontaine's *Enchanted Cup,* for example, as produced by these players, was admirable, and a certain New York play reviewer was entirely justified in speaking of it in the highest terms, but the fact that he thought the words for an "enchanted cup" really meant an "exchanged coupé" detracted a little from the value of his testimony.

This may have been rather an extreme instance among the commentators, but there were approximations to it on all sides and particularly among those people who adored, as they said, the French drama, French art, the fine, frank simplicity of the French character, and above all the incomparable lucidity of the French language and the inimitable manner that the French have of saying things. For though we Gallophiles may sometimes get a little bit mixed up; though we may mistake a bad player for a good one, and prose for poetry, and a commonplace for a shining epigram; though we may confound a horse-cab with a crystal vessel, and humor with obscenity; though, as we would say, these *nuances* may to a certain extent

be lost upon us, it does not follow that our love of French things is any less intense, and it certainly is no less panegyrical. But it does follow, I believe, that at that particular moment we were not quite ripe for a serious encounter with the French drama when rendered in actual French; and its discontinuance was no reflection on our artistic taste. We had not reached the stage at which artistic taste emerges. We were far away from the intimacies of art, battling in the outskirts of comprehension.

"Messieurs et mesdames: During my six weeks' sojourn in your wonderful country I have realized that America is one thing above all others. It is the land of opportunity."—*Enthusiastic applause.*

The welcome accorded to certain French lecturers by our great universities, society leaders and women's clubs during the war made no unfair distinctions. It was not withheld merely because the lecturer through no fault of his own, had nothing to say; nor was the applause reserved for the better portions of his discourse, or even for those portions which were intelligible. One of the most successful lectures ever delivered before a woman's club in New York City was given by a Frenchman, who, having taken a severe cold, was entirely inaudible from beginning to end. The applause was almost continuous. In the warmth

of our ardor for France one Frenchman was as good as another, just as after the first intoxication any brand of wine will do. The one French *conférencier* from whom all good Gallophiles should immediately have fled was, by a strange mischance, precisely the one that riveted their attention. Three of our leading universities and huge bands of our socially important womanhood succumbed instantly to his charm. It is to the honor of the French nation that it sent over to us as a rule only perfectly sensible persons; but it really was not necessary. It might have sent over imbeciles and in the very centre of our American French culture no one would have noticed anything amiss. In the present state of our knowledge subtle distinctions of this sort are thrown away on us.

We can pay Frenchmen every compliment in the world except that of telling them apart. Even our most cultivated critics, having it on good authority that a gifted French author has a brilliant style, will generally quote by a strange fatality the rare passages in his writings that are entirely commonplace.

I do not blame other Americans for dabbling in French, since I myself am the worst of dabblers, but I see no reason why any of us should pretend that it is anything more than dabbling. The usual way of reading French does not lead even to an acquaintance with French literature. Everybody

knows that words in a living language in order to be understood have to be lived with. They are not felt as a part of living literature when you see them pressed out and labeled in a glossary, but only when you hear them fly about. A word is not a definite thing susceptible of dictionary explanation. It is a cluster of associations, reminiscent of the sort of men that used it, suggestive of social class, occupation, mood, dignity or the lack of it, primness, violences, pedantries or platitudes. It hardly seems necessary to say that words in a living literature ought to ring in the ear with the sounds that really belong to them, or that poetry without an echo cannot be felt. Poetry if it rings in the ears of the usual American reader of French literature must inevitably make a noise that in no wise resembles any measured human sound; it is merely a punctuated din. But probably it does not sound at all; it is probably read as stenographic notes.

It may be that there is no way out of it. Perhaps it is inevitable that the colleges which had so long taught the dead languages as if they were buried should now teach the living ones as if they were dead. But there is no need of pretending that this formal acquaintance with the books results in an appreciation of literature. No sense of the intimate quality of a writer can be founded on a verbal vacuum. His plots, his place in literature,

his central motives, and the opinion of his critics could all be just as adequately conveyed, if his books were studied in the language of the deaf and dumb. Of course, one may be drawn to an author by that process but it would hardly be the artistic attraction of literature; it is as if one felt drawn to a woman by an interest exclusively in her bones. Elementary as these remarks may seem I offer them to Gallophiles without apology. On the contrary I rather fear that I am writing over their heads.

Of course nobody realizes how far away he is, for the pursuit of the French language in this country is invariably accompanied by the belief that it has been overtaken. One hardly ever meets an American who knows any French at all who is not filled with a strange optimism as to the amount of it, for the learning of French is a sort of course in progressive hallucination, everybody believing, both teacher and taught, that he is further along than he is.

I have heard it said that some day there might be such a change in the system of teaching as would enable a careful student, after seven years, to face an actual French person without stuttering, without wild and groundless laughter, without agony of gesture, and without gargling his throat. I have heard reformers say that the American expert in the French language really must be saved

from the sort of embarrassments he now undergoes. He ought not to be obliged, for example, they say, to leave a house by the fire-escape because he cannot ask his way to the door; or to be served four times to potatoes because he cannot say, *"Je n'en veux plus;* or to go about insulting people whom he has no desire to insult; or to use language to his hostess which he finds afterward to have been highly obscene; or to tell a story in a mystic tongue, known only to himself, compounded of the ruins of two languages, or in the deaf-and-dumb alphabet supplemented by gymnastic feats, or in words so far apart that everybody in the room listens to the ticking of the clock between them.

I know nothing about the chance of future changes, but I have observed very often the present results; and I will reproduce here as accurately as I can the table-talk of a serious and by no means unintelligent man, a finished product of the present system. He begins, of course, almost invariably by telling the French person that sits next to him that he is a woman or that he is not a woman. He will then say that he is in the rear because a long time ago he was held underneath the city; that he tilled the soil of his office slowly; that he did not jump till six o'clock, though he usually jumps at five; that he likes cats and oaks and that he had a cat and an oak once who would

eat in the cup together; that his aunt had a cat who killed six smiles in one day; that he had dropped a piece of bread on the ceiling; that it is a good time though the paper promised tears; that he swims better in dirty water than in cool because it throws him up in the air. And he will ask for the following objects, all of which he believes can be found on the table or easily obtained: A saddle—he wants to put some of it in his soup; a hillside; a little more of the poison; a pear-tree; a bass wind instrument full of milk; the hide of any animal; a farmer's daughter of shameless character; and a portion of a well-set, thick, short-backed horse.

Now this sort of thing will happen not only to almost any student under the present system, but to the majority of the teachers themselves, and as a rule they do not know that it is happening. Many Americans will talk French at intervals all through their lives without ever finding out that they are not saying a word in French; so great are the powers of divination among the gifted people with whom they converse. And again and again you will see persons who have not emerged from the condition of the young man whose conversation I have quoted chosen as French teachers in institutions of learning. It is compatible with present standards of scholarship. One may behave in this manner and publish an intelligible

monograph on the Félibrige. One may curl up in some corner of Romance philology where he will never be disturbed, or range through five centuries of French literature, putting authors in their places, or make those unnecessary remarks beneath a classic text which constitute the essence of footnote gentility; in short, one may be Teutonically efficient all around and about the French language —over it and under it and behind it—and never once be in it, never once be able to enter into the simplest human relation with any one who uses it.

And if he is a true product of the system he will be perfectly satisfied. He will say that chattering with French people is only a pleasant accomplishment, after all, and can easily be acquired at any time by living with them; that it has nothing in common with the aims of serious scholarship; that it is not to be compared in importance with the ability to read and appreciate books; that there is no room for it in the present system and that it would not be desirable if there were. He will add lightly that some time he means to brush up his French conversation. He will say this without a qualm, without a trace of pity for the people he means to brush it on. He does not know that an American brushing his French in a room bears the same relation to any peaceful conversation that may be going on in it at the time as is borne by a carpet-sweeper in action. He does

not know that an American when brushing his French ought to be kept out of rooms. He does not know that if in the future the relations between this country and France should unhappily become strained it will be largely due to Americans brushing French. The system not only withholds from us the means of understanding the French language; it encourages us to misunderstand it. It fills us with the assurance that we are doing easily what we are not doing at all. It seems as if American instruction in French were designed for the frustration of civilized intercourse.

I cannot really blame that French lady who, after long association with the American functionaries in Paris during the war, pronounced the opinion that at their best Americans are children and at their worst they are brutes; nor can I blame the Americans. I have no doubt that a large part of the unpleasantness was linguistic. It is probable that every one of those Americans was trying to say something very agreeable to the lady, but when put into language it turned out the other way. It is probable that many of them cursed the lady and never knew.

CLASSIC DEBATE

In one of those good, solid British papers, where, time out of mind, correspondents have flashed Latin quotations at the editor, or written long letters on "What constitutes a gentleman?" they were still, even in war-time, debating in their usual way, the question of the classics, and they are as busy with it as ever to-day.

The argument on each side is always very simple. One tells you that with Latin and Greek he would never have been the man he now is. The other says that he would never have been the man he now is without them. They sometimes vary it by saying that they would have sooner become the men they now are, with (or without) the classics. Stripped to its bare bones, the debate seems to be a contest between self-satisfactions. Why each is so pleased with his present condition is never explained.

Yet that is obviously of the first importance. Who cares how a mind was nourished if he can see no reason why he should place any value on the mind? When "Doctor of Divinity" writes at great length on behalf of his humanities, he

does not appear particularly humane, and if "Biologist" is glad to be without any humanities at all, there is nothing about "Biologist" personally that tends to make you glad as well. On the contrary, you would often like to take the classics out of "Doctor of Divinity" and thrust them into "Biologist," just by way of shifting things about a bit on the chance of improving the situation.

"Philonous" and "Scientificus" come out about even in dullness, and when old "Philomathicus" writes from Warwickshire about all that Vergil has done for him, everyone with a grain of good taste is sorry Vergil did it. To the mind of an impartial witness it always ends in a draw. If they did not brag about it, you could no more tell which of them had had the classics and which had not, than you could tell which was vaccinated, if they did not roll up their sleeves. The only thing you can make out of the affair, with scientific certainty, is that in every case either the education was wrong or the wrong man was educated. And that must be precisely the impression that is left on any anxious British parent who seriously observes the usual culture squabble as it comes out in the magazines. He must long to save the child from the ultimate fate of either party to it. He would hate in after life to have the child explode like the gentleman who is so proud of his

classic contents; he would hate to see the child some day cave in like the gentleman who is so proud to be without them. For that unsatisfactory termination is almost the rule in these violent culture contests. Each combatant before he can reach his adversary seems to go to pieces all by himself. Never by any chance does one kill the other, though you would suppose on the first inspection of each one of them that nothing could be easier to do.

It is the same way with the discussion of the question in this country though it is here more likely to turn on considerations of practical utility. The practical utility argument, for or against the study of Latin and Greek, seems to me to break down for the same reason that the German efficiency argument broke down during the war. That is to say, it does not take into consideration the imponderables. From a good many articles setting forth to what extent Latin and Greek have helped or hindered the respective writers in their careers it would appear that the only test that they apply is that of contemporary social importance.

If I were to say, for example, that but for my firm grasp at the age of twelve on the exact difference between the gerund and the gerundive, I should not have risen to what I have risen to, it would not be accounted an argument for the

classics, but rather as a warning against them. People would look me up and find that I had not risen to anything.

But if I should stand splendidly forth as president of the All-Columbian Amalgamated Boot and Shoe Concern and attribute my well-known organizing talent to the mastery at an early age of Xenophon's *Anabasis,* there would be instant cheering in the classical ranks; whereas if I said that had it not been for Xenophon's *Anabasis,* I should have got ahead much faster, should, in fact, have fairy whizzed into my presidency of the shoe business, shouts of triumph would at once ascend from the Modern School.

There you have the sort of test that is regarded as really practical—what the classics actually did to some large, perfectly substantial and hard-headed shoe man. It is a test much valued in this debate.

If I were a classical scholar I would not rest my case on these arguments from practical life, as the term practical is understood in these discussions. It may be gratifying if one can cite a dozen bank presidents who approve of Latin and Greek, but it is a short-lived pleasure. Some one is soon citing two dozen who disapprove of them. I have just finished reading the fifteenth article published within the last two years, which proceeds on the same assumption in respect to a prac-

tical life. The writer rounds up in defense of the classics a considerable number of the politically, commercially, and scientifically successful persons of the moment. There are one President, two ex-Presidents, two Secretaries of State, and a handsome showing of administrators, bankers, heads of trust and insurance companies, engineers, mathematicians, electricians, economists, botanists, zoologists, psychologists, physicists, and chemists. This may have been a more bountiful and seductive list than any anti-classical man had produced at that moment, but it is not a more bountiful one than he could produce, if you gave him time. It contains fifty professors of science, both pure and applied. The man who could not within a week produce fifty-five on the other side would not be worth his salt as an anti-classical debater. Then the unfortunate writer of the first article would have to find five more, and thus the debate would resolve itself into a mad competitive scramble for botanists, engineers, business men, and the like, to which, so far as I can see, there would be no logical conclusion till they had all been caught and tabulated. And after this was all done, we should be just where we were when we started. For the success of these successful persons is not a succsful test.

If the majority of them knew, what they never could know—that is to say that they presided,

banked, administered, engineered, insured, botanized, and psychologized no better for their study of the classics, the question of the classics would still be as open as before. As human beings they were probably engaged during a considerable portion of their lives in doing other things than climbing into presidencies or directng banks or building bridges or organizing other human beings. If not, they were forlorn creatures whom it is not desirable to reproduce. As human beings their leisure was probably a matter of some practical concern to them. Statistics of success cannot decide a question that pertains to their personal leisure. I doubt if statistics of success can decide any question at all, when the standard of success is the vague, unstable, arbitrary thing implied in these discussions. Nobody wants his own life regulated by the way a chance majority of these successful persons happen to feel about theirs. Still less would he want his children to be brought up only to resemble them. Every plain person realizes that there is a vast domain of thought, feeling, and activity, including religion, music, poetry, painting, sport, dancing, among many other things that subsists quite independently of the good or bad opinions of any motley group of persons picked out by educators as successful at this day.

When they tell you that some railway manager

thinks that Latin has helped him in his labors and that he still reads Horace for pleasure, they are telling you nothing either for or against the study of Latin. Prove that the study of Latin and Greek so sapped a man's vitality that he lost five years in getting to the top of his gas company, and you have really proved nothing against it. Prove that the extraordinary mental energy acquired by the perusal of *Hoedus stans in tecto domus lupum vidit praetereuntem* shot him into the United States Senate at thirty-six and you have not said one word in its favor. This seems fairly obvious, but the contrary assumption underlies a vast area of educational printed matter on the subject—all based on a standard of momentary success, that is to say, a standard of momentary public toleration.

Yet even an educator would not be any more eager to have his daughter learn to dance, if he knew that the chief justice of the Supreme Court had danced regularly all through his career for its beneficial effects upon his profession, and was now dancing almost every moment of the day just for the pleasure of it. He does not want the doings of the chief justice to mould his daughter's life in all particulars. He probably would just as lief she did not resemble in many ways that undoubtedly respectable person.

And the question of the classics is in this outside

domain, whatever their casual relation may be to a random group of professional, business, and scientific activities. It is true, for example, that the best poetry in the English or any other language is detested by the one thousand ablest executives in this country at this moment. But that is not supposed, even among educators, to have any relevance to the question of its value. Even in the wildest educational articles of the month, you do not find this fact advanced as a conclusive argument from practical life for the promotion of the detestation of poetry. Nobody takes the child aside and says: "Hate poetry and up you go to the very top of the drygoods business."

These arguments assume that any influence was harmful if it delayed these not very interesting persons in blossoming into the sort of beings they afterwards became. From reading the testimony of these persons it is impossible to discern any reason for that belief. Each one implies that if he had had his way, he would have become the man he is much sooner. But how does he know that he did not become the man he is too soon? Writers on the subject find an argument for a course of study in the mere fact that it has speeded miscellaneous successful persons along the way they went toward the places where you happen to find them, when so far as any sensible

man can see, they might just as well be somewhere else.

But perhaps educators do not really attach any importance to this nonsense. They are, no doubt, more sensible than they seem. There is no use in taking the malign view of educators that their personalties resemble their usual educational articles. They probably do not believe any more than I do in a neat hierarchy of success with the better man always a peg above the worse one, or that if you skim the cream of contemporary celebrites you will have a collection of more practical lives than if you had taken the next layer or the layer below that. Practical lives, as led in Germany during the last forty years or so, must begin to seem to them now somewhat visionary. And they can hardly retain a sublime confidence in the standards of success of their own generation, which, though equipped with the very latest modern efficiency tests and appliances, nevertheless reverted overnight almost to a state of cannibalism. They probably would admit that instead of compelling the next generation to resemble the sort of persons that society has often permitted to become uppermost in this, it might be only humane to give it a fair chance of *not* resembling them. When you read the language of educational disputes tradition begins to seem a reasonable thing. Educational debaters argue

with an air of mathematical certainty, as if working out an equation, and then produce a solution containing such hopelessly unknown quantities as the value of the opinion of fifty-seven more or less accidentally important persons as to the sort of lives all the rest of the world should live.

Of course, these speed tests of education applied to public careers are unconvincing, simply because the larger part of life does not consist in publicly careering. And distrust of the middle-aged successful man on the subject of his own education is justified, because he is an instinctive partisan of his own success. It would be a cruel thing to entrust writers on education with their own education. If they had been brought up on their own writings many of them would never have pulled through.

Take for instance, the illustrious case of Mr. Bernard Shaw. Mr. Shaw favored a system of education which began by abolishing almost everything and which would certainly have resulted in abolishing Mr. Shaw. It was a good, clean, consistent sweep of every tradition. It abolished homes, marriage, fathers, mothers, schools, rules, text-books, settled residence, settled convictions, moral, social and religious preconceptions or controls; it rid the child of family ties, personal affections, local customs and every other narrowing influence, and turned him out to roam and learn

and so have a chance of free development; everybody's children to be brought up by everybody else, and thus escape the danger of spoiling and all to be kept in constant motion all over the British Isles lest they contract a local prejudice—each to be perfectly free in all respects except that he must not entertain a settled principle or meet a relative.

Now I do not criticize this system, nor do I deny that it may be just as sensible as the ideas of modern educational writers generally. But I do contend that if Mr. Shaw had been brought up under it the modern English and American stage would have lost its brightest light. He curses all restraints on his development. I am grateful to them, for I am quite sure they saved his life. A Shaw more Shavian than he actually became would have been hanged at the age of twenty.

And I should take tradition rather than the word of Mr. G. H. Wells in those two novels of his on the subject of education. I believe the classical tradition had more to do with the making of Mr. H. G. Wells than any treatise on biology that he ever read. Mr. Wells has more in common with Plato than he has with Herbert Spencer, and it is because he writes more in the style of the Phædo than he does in the style of *The Principles of Sociology* that we read him. If Mr. Wells con-

siders Plato a dull old fool, as he probably does, that has nothing to do with it. He has absorbed since his nativity a literature that has been steeped for many centuries in the writings of these old fogies he despises. In a sense they own him, so far as there is anything in him that is worth permanently possessing. Mr. Wells is essentially a very ancient person, but, being incapable of self-inspection, he does not know how he came by a large part of his incentives and suggestions. That is why he has so often moved in circles rediscovering old thoughts that antedate the Christian era, and thinking they were new. If an archeologist examined Mr. Wells, he would find him full of the ruins of ancient Rome, and he is much the brisker writer for containing them. Nobody would be reading Mr. H. G. Wells to-day if he were a mere product of contemporary science. If he could have applied his theory of education to his own bringing-up he would have committed literary suicide.

I mention these writers as the most conspicuous examples of failure to take into account the imponderables. I believe that it is these imponderables which account in a large measure for anything in them that is likely to prove to be permanent; in short that they are the product of the humanism that they disown. I believe that so far as they or any other exceptional living writers are

in a permanent sense lively, they are in reality dancing to tunes played by persons who died before the Christian era.

A better instance than either of these typical contemporaries is that of one of their immediate ancestors. Samuel Butler in "The Way of All Flesh" is almost as ferocious toward Latin and Greek as he is toward fathers and mothers. He suggests no substitute for Latin or Greek any more than he suggests a substitute for fathers and mothers, but he implies that all four should be abandoned instantly on the chance that substitutes may turn up. Now I know that the radicalism of Samuel Butler in respect to these and other matters is what mainly interests the modern commentator. But it has nothing to do with his permanent interest. Dozens of more radical writers may be found everywhere who are exceedingly dull. The value of "The Way of All Flesh" is in its texture—the weaving together of a thousand small things—and not in a few large, central thoughts. Essentially it is in the best tradition of the English novel. Also it is hopelessly entangled with the classics. He had to make his hero take honors in them at the university in order to get the muscle to attack them. He is a prize-fighter who knocks out his own boxing-masters in his indignation at having learned nothing from them.

But I suppose the arguments I have been quot-

ing are merely the little missiles of debate. I doubt if any one really thinks it is a matter to be settled by the points at which persons happen to be perching in society at the present moment. I suppose these writers would admit that the classics are not and never have been chiefly valuable as the means of success. They are obviously valued as the means of escaping its consequences. They are not esteemed for getting one on in the modern world, but for getting one pleasantly out of it—that is to say for the exactly opposite reason to that which social statistics, psychological measurements of mental growth, testimony of engineers, educational specialists, chemists and bank directors always emphasize.

Men turn to the classics in the hope of meeting precisely the sort of people who would not write these articles on the classics. Men turn to the classics to escape from their contemporaries. Current arguments do not affect the central point, namely the wisdom of breaking with a tradition that has bound together the literatures of the world for twenty centuries and has vivified a large proportion of the greatest authors in our own.

But I do not believe that any muddle of present-day educational policy can do any lasting damage. Suppose it goes from bad to worse. Suppose after ceasing to be required, the study of Latin and Greek ceases even to be admitted. Suppose this

is followed by another plunge of progress that would dazzle even Mr. Wells and a mere parsing acquaintance with a Latin author is regarded as not merely frivolous, or eccentric, like fox-trotting or button- collecting, but as downright heinous, like beer-drinking in the teeth of a Prohibition gale.

Imagine even graver changes—imagine the era of scientific barbarism dawning in 1925 as the unscientific era of barbarism dawned in 476 and Soviets set up everywhere in America, and paper scarce as everything would be under Bolshevism, and Latin and Greek books turned again into palimpsets and obliterated and replaced with strange dark Bolshevik texts presumably all written in the Yiddish language. Nevertheless, at the blackest moment of black Bolshevism they would still be read just as they were still read at the very darkest moment of the ages which we call dark.

The Bolshevists could be no worse for them than were the German tribes. Here and there half-human Bolhevists would preserve a text just as here and there the less fanatical monks did, and there would be a vast deal of subterranean scholarship at work, all the keener on account of persecution. Probably Bolshevist suppression would do no more harm than the teaching of American Germanized college professors did during the last generation. In fact, it might actually

be a great deal better if we were to persecute the classics than to teach them as we do. When you read the notes in the usual school Vergil, simple illiteracy takes on a certain charm.

Make Latin and Greek illegal, and caves in the mountains will gradually fill up with refugees bearing dictionaries—refugees from the great sprawling documentary modern novel, from modern philosophies gone stale in ten years, from new thoughts better expressed twenty-four hundred years ago, from the yearly splash of new poets swimming along in schools, from religions of good digestion, competitions for public astonishment, the shapeless solemnity of presidential messages and serious magazines, in short, from all the incoherency and formlessness of the tremendous opinions of the too familiar present moment which somehow for the life of him nobody can manage to remember the next moment. It may not be a bad experiment. It will inevitably be followed by a renaissance.

THE CHOICE OF BAD MANNERS

An Englishman's burdens are hard enough to bear without a London writer's insisting that from this time on he shall expand into "warmth and cordiality" at the first meeting with a stranger; and the writer, though right in his view of the importance of Anglo-American goodwill, is wrong in saying that the chill of the British introduction causes suffering in this country. The grimness of that first moment has already become traditional and it is now expected by every people in the world. There is no hardship in the long silence and the leaden eye when you are prepared for them and know they mean no harm. On the other hand an encounter with a suddenly expanding Englishman would be shocking, in its sharp reversal of all precedents. There is no reason why the Englishman, like other solids, should not have his melting point. If he unbent on first acquaintance, he would seem like a ramrod that melted in the sun. Smile after the first handshake, says this writer, and be natural—as if anything could be less natural to a well-bred Englishman, than any such wild social turbulence. No one ex-

pects warmth from him out of hand any more than one expects a hen to lay a soft-boiled egg for him; and a wise man will blame the one no more than the other. After all, why is their way worse than ours? There is no greater hardship in having to dig conversation out of an Englishman than in having to dig yourself out of the conversation of your fellow citizens.

But there does seem to be a misunderstanding between those two small classes in the two countries who are mainly concerned with the outward gentilities. And in regard to the true nature of snobbery, they are certainly at odds. I think our side has the right of it—my patriotic bias, perhaps.

"How the Americans do love a Duke!" is a frequent comment in certain British journals, and they then proceed to the sober generalization that "the United States is a nation of flunkies and of snobs." Whoever will be at the pains to follow British weekly journalism will find this sentiment repeated every little while. He will observe among this class of writers that vulgarity is a matter of geography, being reckoned from Pall Mall as time is from Greenwich.

Now as to snobs, New York's streets are of course often choked with them. A duke, an elephant, a base-ball pitcher on Fifth Avenue, may at any time be the center of a disproportionate and servile attention from both the American

people and the press. Yet the cult of the egregious and the greatly advertised has never the deep devotion of sound snobbery.

Take the American newspaper view of "society," for example. You would certainly have to call that snobbery. A friend of mine once became quite indignant on the subject and wrote about it bitterly. According to the newspapers, said he, all the blessings and misfortunes of life fall only on people who are "in society." He wanted to know why in Heaven's name they print such "arrant nonsense," and he asked, "If we are not all snobs, why try so hard to make us so?"

Now of course this country is full of climbers. No one here is content with that station in life to which it has pleased God to call him; and if he were, some female relative would surely push him along. And since we are all trying to "get on," with a pretty fair chance of it, for our dullest people are always at the top, it is not strange that we should value all the little symbols of on-getting, and being "in society" is one of them. What if "society" does stretch as far as the wives of six plumbers at a luncheon? What if the term itself fades into a mere newspaper gesture or habit and a society reporter at a scene of South African carnage would probably, by mere reflex action, write, "Hottentot Society Girl Spears Five?" That does not turn readers into snobs. On the

contrary, it confuses the snobbery they had before, and leaves them without a social chart or compass. A snob cannot tell from an American newspaper what to be snobbish about. The acreage of our newspaper snobbery is of course enormous. Even England, the Sinai of top-hat commandments, land of Turveydrop, George Osborne, and Sir Willoughby Patterne, England itself shows not so wide and foolish an expanse of newspaper snobbery. But the true measure of snobbery is not in area, but in depth. At the bottom of a true snob his snobbery is united with his religion. Respectable British papers do not, like our own, mix up all sorts of people under "society" and chatter about them every day; to them it is a real thing and holy. Our papers confound snobbery; theirs treat it with respect. Try as we will, we cannot really tell who's who; we know that we are guessing. At the root of American snobbery is the cruel canker of distrust. "Society," as an American newspaper concept, includes any member of the Caucasian race not necessarily rich or even well-to-do, but better off than somebody else somewhere. If interest in it is snobbish, it is one of the broadest, least invidious forms of snobbishness ever known, approximating, one might say, a pretty general brotherly love; for it draws the mind to a Harlem sociable, and attracts the human soul to the strange, wild doings of Aldermen's

wives at their tea-tables in Brooklyn, probably clad in goatskins.

It is not for an upstart and volatile people to dispute the calm supremacy of authentic snobbery. Your true snob is not inquisitive at all, for he has no sense of any social values not his own. He does not flourish in a sprawling and chaotic continent. It is among the tightly closed minds of tight little islands that he is seen at his best. Our snobbery is not a sturdy plant, for its vigor is sapped by that social uncertainty at the root of it; and what is taken for it here usually springs from quite alien qualities—curiosity, a vast social innocence, and a blessed inexperience of rank. To be sure, if King George came to New York some one might clip his coat-tails for a keepsake; and it is quite probably that Mrs. Van Allendale, of Newport, if asked to meet him, would be all of a tremble whether to address him as "Sire" or "My God." But what has this in common with the huge assurances of true snobbery—its enormous certainty of the Proper Thing, in clothes, people, religion, sports, manners, and races, and its indomitable determination not to guess again?

I wish I could do justice to the type of British literary journalism in which this sort of thing appears. I have tried many times in the twenty years of my observation but never to my satisfaction. I suppose it will do no harm to try again. I shall

have to typify it under the imaginary title of *The Gentleman's Review,* because to pick out a single one of the several competitors would be invidious. The essential point of *The Gentleman's Review* is that it is written by persons of the better sort for persons of the better sort. And not only must the writer be a better sort of person; he must constantly say that he is a better sort of person, and for pages at a time he must say nothing else. I have read long articles which when boiled down told the reader nothing else. I have read articles on socialism, patriotism, labor programmes, poetry, the vulgarity of America and of the Antipodes, and on divers other subjects which did literally tell nothing else to the socialist, laborer, poet, or American or Antipodean outcast who read them. The gentility of the writers is never merely suggested; it is announced, and usually in terms of severity. A coal-heaver reading *The Gentleman's Review* would be informed in words of unsparing cruelty that he is low. Indeed, it seems the main purpose—at times the only purpose—for which the *Review* exists—to tell coal-heavers and other outside creatures that they are low. And by outside creatures I mean almost everybody. I mean not only all Americans, all Canadians, and other inhabitants of a hemisphere which, to say the least, is in the worst possible taste as a hemisphere, besides being notoriously ex-

ternal to the British Isles. I mean almost everybody in the right kind of hemisphere. I mean almost everybody in the British Isles, or even on the better streets of London. Only a handful of people can read the typical article of *The Gentleman's Review* without feeling that they are at the bottom of a social precipice.

The ideal of the true-born Gentleman's Reviewer is not only social exclusiveness, but mental exclusiveness. He does not argue against an idea of which he disapproves; he shows that idea to the door. In a long paper on some form of radicalism he will say at the start that he must really refuse to speak of radicalism. The right sort of people do not speak of radicalism. They have dismissed it from their minds. And he devotes his paper to developing the single point that the only way to deal with radicals is to expunge them from your list of acquaintances the moment you find out that they are radicals, and thereafter not to say a single word to them beyond conveying the bare information that they have been expunged. I recall just such a paper as this, and I recall the impression it made on seven extremely dignified persons whose successive letters to the editor, all dated from respectable London clubs, declared that in the opinion of the writers the danger of radicalism could not be averted in any other way: Gentlemen must dismiss radicals from their com-

pany just as they had dismissed radicalism from their minds. That done, radicalism would perish.

A writer on a Labor-party programme in *The Gentleman's Review* would no more think of meeting the arguments for the Labor-party programme than he would think of meeting the laboring-man himself. Why bother to prove a Labor-party programme unsound in face of the towering absurdity that there should be such a thing as a Labor party and that it should have such a thing as a programme? There are social certitudes that gentlemen do not discuss. When Labor raises a question, the Gentleman's Reviewer, if he is true to type, will simply raise an eyebrow. When woman's progress was blackening the sky, I read dozens of article in *The Gentleman's Review* on woman's suffrage from which I am sure no reader could make out anything whatever except that a shudder was running through some gentlemanly frames. At the threat of a revolt of the working-class some time ago, *The Gentleman's Review* became speechless almost immediately as to the nature of the revolt. It could only say that some labor leader had been impolite to a member of the upper class, and that it feared the lower classes might, if they kept on in their present courses, become impolite to the upper ones. The thought of other perils more horrible than that shocked it to silence. But perhaps it could not

think of other things more horrible than that. There are things in this world that minds of this gentlemanly quality really must decline to meet. They are most of the things in this world.

It is at its best in rebuking other people's manners while unconsciously displaying its own. Take American manners, for instance. Forty years ago it was saying we were rude because we were young. It is still saying so. "Centuries of polite international tradition"—we are to understand that it took at least that much to make a Gentleman's Reviewer—are not behind us Americans. "Instinctive delicacy and sympathy with the feelings of others"—such as is displayed in the pages of the *Review*—"are not commonly possessed by the very young"—meaning, of course, possessed by Americans. Why, then, aspire to the courtesy and tact of ripe old world-wise Europe?

As a rude young thing I should not think of aspiring to it, if I did not read on the very next page, perhaps, that the whole share of the United States in the late war, from the very beginning of it to the very end of it, was merely a "military parade." Then the "delicacy" and the "sympathy" and the "polite international tradition" of this fine old world-wise representative are suddenly brought not only within my reach, but within easy reach of almost any one. The cook and the bootblack and the garbage-man and I, and every

sort of low American, including colored people, may now burst out spontaneously and joyously and unashamed with all the crudities inherent in our natures, knowing that we can go no farther in manners of this type than the writers quoted have already gone—for the simple reason that there is no farther to go. If that is the degree of "traditional international politeness" required by the rich and mellow culture of an older world, why need a Ute or a Yahoo despair of it? Raw man from Oklahoma though I am, utterly unfinished, confined almost exclusively to the companionship of cows, backgroundless, uncouth, and in social experience a tadpole, even I can be as delicately urbane as these exponents of an Old World culture.

Now I confess I have idealized the situation in representing this element as the sole constituent of any single periodical. It may constitute only a part of a magazine or newspaper, and it may appear only sporadically. Several magazines which it pervaded largely at one time have since died of it, and others seem about to die. But it is still to be found in reassuring quantities, though scattered, and one could at any time, by judicious selection, make up a *Gentleman's Review.*

I believe it is not only harmless, but desirable. It is not representative of the English people or of any English class. It is the unconscious bur-

lesque—often a very good one—of insularity, and the world is the better for a good burlesque. It is no more like the courteous and witty Englishman one meets in life or in books or in the newspapers than is James Yellowplush. If Major Pendennis or Podsnap came to life again and turned into literary persons, they would write like *The Gentleman's Review.* And it is pleasant to meet again the Pendennises and Podsnaps. Finally it has supplied many objects of entertaining satire to the best English writers of plays and fiction during our own generation. There is only one bad thing about it and that is entirely the fault of my fellow-countrymen. Owing to the unfortunate colonialism of the American literary class, there are quarters in which this sort of thing is taken seriously. I believe when that happens it is a surprise, even to the Gentleman's Reviewer himself. I believe even he is secretly aware that, whatever nature's reason for presenting him to a patient world may be, it cannot be for any such purpose as that.

In regard to American manners, by the way, what nonsense we ourselves are in the habit of writing; why these serious articles every now and then on the decline of American manners? One appeared only the other day in a New York magazine. Declined from what, I wonder. We have no manners now, to be sure, but there is not a sign that at any moment of our past history we

ever had any. One would suppose that the prim people who tell us from time to time that the "subtle note of real distinction is fading from society" would be at some pains to ascertain when and where it had bloomed. The "graceful civilities of our grandfathers have vanished," they say. But do they mean literally grandfathers? If so, that would take us back to about the era of Mr. Potiphar and the Reverend Cream Cheese and ormolu and universal drunkenness. If they mean great-grandfathers, one has a notion that about that time the Hon. Lafayette Kettle and Hannibal Chollop were not uncommon types. If they insist on the eighteen-thirties, the "subtle note of real distinction" must have been extremely hard to find, to judge from de Tocqueville and Mrs. Trollope, while in the decade before that, Stendhal and the younger Gallatin had never found a trace of it. Sometimes they wave the hand in a general sort of way to the "gentle courtesies of a hundred years ago," but it was at about that date, I believe, that Tom Moore was complaining that our manners were rotten before they were ripe, while at the close of the eighteenth century we find that very agreeable French gentlman, M. Moreaud de Saint-Méry, remarking the singular brutality of the gentle families of Philadelphia—not in a very exacting temper, either, for he merely insisted that people ought to show more of a spirit of social

helpfulness than to go on skating while their friends were falling through the ice and drowning. And these being merely the haphazard recollections of extremely desultory readings, one naturally infers that the bibliography of bad manners must be enormous and that the dates in it, as the history of the country goes, would probably be of quite respectable antiquity. I do not deny that there may have been "graceful civilities" at some time or other, possibly at Plymouth Rock; I merely say that these writers never by any chance produce the proof of it, despite one's pardonable skepticism. These decorous little lamentations on decline do, indeed, boil down to nothing. It is as if one should say, the "subtle note of real distinction" has within the last five years faded from the subway, or manners are no longer courtly on the uptown evening car.

The frequent appearance of these articles brings out an important point of difference between French manners and our own. An Englishman might write such articles, but a Frenchman, I believe could not. Sensible Americans go to France for the purpose of escaping the type of mind that produces them. They have nothing to do with manners, but are merely treatises on toothpick orthodoxy. One of them begins with an anecdote of a "distinguished foreigner" who, when asked what he thought was

the most striking American characteristic, replied, "Your lack of respect for your superiors." After rubbing that in for the proper hygienic interval, the writer advances to a series of salutary reflections like these: "Nothing can be further from the truth than the conception that personal delicacy means personal weakness," and the "unmannered man adds nothing to the picture of life." Why add to the national stock of uneasy self-consciousness? Surely there is no country on the face of the globe where so many people to the square mile are fidgetting over some perfectly worthless propriety. Silent prayer is the only recourse for any honest writer of this type. The moment he preaches manners to us he puckers us up still more.

And there is this further peril in the thumping hortatory evangel on the need of being personally delicate and refined, delivered by people who from their manner of writing seem as much alike and rudimentary as doughnuts. If they keep it up they will surely start a Movement. We can organize for politeness just as well as for motherhood or for reading poetry, and a Federation of Clubs of Gentlemanly Endeavor may be even now in the wind. The very next writer of this article might in the natural order of things find himself president of a "nation-wide" organization for the promotion of personal delicacy, or at least chairman of his State committee on drawing-room

charm. I can hear the speech at the founder's dinner, for, of course, the thing would begin with a dinner:

"Gentlemen, the mark of this era of social awakening is, as you well know, the spirit of organized social service. People have organized in our day even in order to chew their own food, and the associations for digestion, for child-rearing, for controlling child-birth, for eating bran, going barefoot, reading prose, keeping healthy, and looking at birds are innumerable. What the individual used formerly to attempt in a feeble manner on his own account he now does efficiently by co-operative endeavor. Things that in the old days no one supposed could be organized are now discharged by thoroughly competent societies. For example, as you probably know, American poetry was organized not long ago, with headquarters at Boston, the secretary being some member of the Lowell family, I believe; and every one of you is doubtless familiar with the practically complete organization of posterity under eugenical auspices. Now, if after two and a half centuries personal delicacy, and that subtle something which distinguishes the manners of other peoples, notably the French, from our own cannot be had by individual initiative, it is high time we employed the measures already so successful in other fields. It is unreasonable to protest against our pro-

gramme on the ground that personal delicacy cannot be organized. The same argument was advanced against the organization of agricultural credit several years ago. Nor is there any force in the argument that at intervals of three months for twenty years articles of equal merit have appeared in American magazines, each pointing to perfect breeding without apparently doing any good. Our propaganda involves the printing of five such articles every month, to say nothing of the leaflets, folders and newspaper paragraphs that will pour in a steady stream into every corner of the country. It is a campaign of education that we have in mind. To any one who objects that no scheme for the promotion of personal delicacy has ever yet succeeded, I reply always with the simple question: "How many well-printed, attractive folders were sent out?" and he always subsides immediately."

TAILOR BLOOD AND THE ARISTOCRACY OF FICTION

Although, as is well known, tailoring ran for three generations in the family of George Meredith, it would seem from a recent biography that his own blood was nearly free from it at the age of two. At that age when another boy (aged four) came to visit him, he showed, according to his biographer, such a marked hauteur of manner that the other boy left the house, never to return. The aristocratic element in the blood had, he thinks, even then overcome the tailor corpuscles.

Though hauteur at the age of two seems to this biographer incompatible with tailor origin, he does not on that account reject the tailor origin. He does not, like other writers on Meredith, invent a noble father for Meredith, or omit his birth altogether, or call it "mysterious," or dismiss it with the usual gasp: "Born of a tailor; who would have thought it!" On the contrary, he decides to make the best of this whole bad tailor business. They were fashionable tailors, at any rate, he says, and they may have fitted clothes to admirals in the Royal Navy; and the grandfather, the 'Great Mel,' had associated on equal terms

with county families—was quite the fine gentleman, indeed; and George had inherited the gentleman part of this grandfather, while escaping every trace of the tailor portion.

I am not a syndicalist and I have no especial sympathy with a tailor soviet. I certainly should no more care to live under a tailor dictatorship than under that of any other labor union. But if the tailor revolution had to come, and the bombs were flying and the streets flowing with the blood of customers, I should be happy to see certain writers on George Meredith fall into the hands of the infuriated mob.

A reasonable view of the relation between tailoring and aristocracy has been quite beyond the power of Meredith commentators— most of them having gone all to gooseflesh at the bare thought of it. And yet Meredith could never have written about upper classes as he did, if he had not been the son of a tailor. Only as the son of a tailor could he have imagined so many of those radiant beings among the daughters of earls. As the son of an earl, he would probably have imagined them among the daughters of tailors. At all events, we should not find them among the daughters of earls in any such proportion as we now find them in his novels. Tailor-distance from an aristocracy in our day is the only safe distance for purpose of enchantment.

And I wonder if our own "best society" would not have stood a better chance in fiction if American novelists had been sons of tailors. Not of course that tailor birth would have made up for the lack of certain other qualities that Meredith possessed, but it might at least have helped a little.

There has never been enough illusion about our upper class, especially among the talented. In fact the more talented people are, the less enthusiastic they seem to be about our upper class. Gifted novelists who know our upper class will die in exile rather than go on knowing it. Bare acquaintance with our upper class drove Henry James from this country for ever; better acquaintance with it made him the most loyal subject of the British Crown. Others have rebounded from contact with our upper classes into the mountains of Vermont. A gifted writer who has once met the better sort of people in New York will often remain for ever after rooted in the Middle Ages. Nothing seems to kill so quickly all enthusiasm for our upper class as contact with it. Even the chance of contact checks the flow of fancy.

It is possible that a really interesting figure in our upper class could be created only in the backwoods by a writer of great talent who had never once emerged. But tailor-distance from our upper class might have done something. It is conceivable that a glamour might be cast over our lead-

ing families at tailor-distance, by a strong novelist who was naturally good at glamour-casting. A cook could not write a good American novel of caste, being in too close contact with the family, but a tailor might.

No American novelist of the first rank, I believe, has ever taken American social distinctions with a tailor seriousness. Something of a tailor seriousness in that matter will be found of course among many good American story-writers, but they are not of the highest rank. Tailor-birth, for example, would hardly have enabled the late Richard Harding Davis to improve on his New York heroes and heroines, probably would not have have resulted in any change at all. Tailor-birth would not have enabled Mr. Robert W. Chambers to throw more of a glamour over the golden few than he has thrown without it. But the fiction of well-bred people in this country has never had the benefit of that Meredith combination of tailor-birth and great talent.

Suppose Mr. Howells had been tailor-born while remaining equally gifted, for example. He might have turned on that upper class of Boston a kindling and imaginative eye. He might have imagined Meredithian aristocrats in Boston—interesting people who did as they pleased. High birth in Boston need not have been the unpleasant thing he describes—making everybody feel what

a blessing it is to be born low and elsewhere. High birth in Boston, seen through the social haze of tailor-distance, might have seemed to him desirable. At all events he would not have learned that every well-bred Boston person must be *un*desirable. He would not have made it a law of his fiction that, whereas interesting people who do as they please are imaginable, they are not even by the wildest riot of the fancy ever to be placed among the upper class of Boston. Tailoring would have mitigated these rigorous results of a too close observation.

Despite the confusion of classes in our time when you never can guess what people will be like from the sort of families they are found in, Meredith could still believe that Blood will tell. And he believed blood told delightfully and in the most minute detail. He believed that aristocratic noses were found on women of the highest class instead of belonging as they generally do to shop girls. He believed in a noble bearing peculiar to lords which is really common to policemen. He imagined in earls the magnificent and aristocratic poise and the beauty of Italian day labourers. He believed duchesses walked like duchesses, when, if we may judge from photographs, they must, rather, have tumbled around; and he believed that people were as stately as he thought they ought to be when he looked at the

dignified and imposing castles that they lived in.

And wit ran in direct ratio to the good birth of his characters, and not inversely. That was the final touch of tailor sublimity. Meredith not only made aristocrats witty in their homes; he made polite society dine out wittily. Brilliant talk, such as is carried on by Jews, and tolerated nowhere in the best society, was attributed by Meredith to the class of people by whom the dullest things in the world have been said and about whom the dullest books in the world have been written.

Henry James, born in a Harlem tailor-shop and never straying far away, Henry James, with three tailor ancestors looking down from the walls upon him, might have imagined five divinely complicated women east of Central Park,—at least he would not have absolutely refused even to try, on the ground that they were unimaginable. Henry James might have worked wonders of aristocratic subtlety even here, had he remained innocent enough, and tailoring was one of the few remaining guarantees of social innocence.

I do not say that glorious creatures like Laura Middleton, or Diana, or Aminta, or the other goddesses of George Meredith could have been freely sprinkled in our upper class by any imagination short of Meredith's, even with Meredith's three-fold tailor start. But I do say that much might have been done for our upper class in fiction

by an imagination raised to the third tailor-power by inheritance. It never has had this supreme literary chance. What are known as social advantages in this country have been fatal to anything like a poetic conception of our upper class. Never show a gifted novelist above the basement stairs, if you wish him to retain an exciting sense of social altitudes. Keep the better sort of literary men away from anybody of the slightest social importance, if you wish any glamour to be cast. Aristocracies of fiction will never be perceived so long as the eyes are open.

In spite of the *Saturday Review,* and parliamentary speeches, and the London *Times,* and Justin McCarthy's Reminiscences, and the vast volume of aristocratic British memoirs published by the score every year in Meredith's lifetime and our own, he created by sheer force of genius, guided by an inherited inclination, the illusion that the very highest families in England could be amusing in their homes. Meredith successfully embodied such a vision of aristocracy as nowadays can be confidently entertained only by three old maids washing dishes in a farm house. It is absurd to imagine, as the biographer does, whom I have quoted at the beginning of this article, that there was no tailor in the blood.

In the present muddle of a changing social order, with the upper class being slowly educated

by the classes below, and getting the little wit it has from them, and all the clever people in one class flying immediately into another, up or down, with blood telling the wrong story and usually a very dull one; with people everywhere turning out to be just what they ought not to be from their antecedents and surroundings, and with the most remarkable of public characters commonly the most deadly objects to the private gaze—in these conditions of our generation, a feat such as Meredith achieved becomes increasingly difficult. It requires, at the least, the advantage of a tailor ancestry.

OUR REFINEMENT

I do not object to that excellent lady who is to be found at intervals in the literary columns of a serious magazine wondering sweetly what the May-fly thinks in June. On the contrary, a May-fly is a good enough excuse for wonder and wonder is a good enough excuse for the most exciting kind of imaginative exercise. There is no reason why the intimations of immortality conveyed to ladies by May-flys should not be a permanent part of every serious magazine on earth.

I do not object, that is to say, to the situation itself. I object only to one appalling circumstance. It is always the same lady and she is always saying exactly the same sweet things, and the language she says them in is not a living human language. The objectionable thing is the awful iterativeness of its subhuman literary propriety.

And it is the same way with all those other things expressive of literary refinement, expressive of nothing else, but recurring with a deadly certainty, weekly, monthly, perennially, and perhaps eternally. Those pious papers on the comic spirit, by American professors of English; those happy

thoughts on the pleasure of reading good books rather than bad; on the imperishable charm of that which is imperishably charming; on the superiority of the "things of the spirit" over other things not mentioned but presumably gross, such as things on the dinner table; humorous apologues of Dame Experience conceived as a school-mistress; tender souvenirs of quaint great-uncles; peeps at a sparrow, nesting—it would be a sin to blame them from any other point of view than that of the future of the English language, for the subjects are irreproachable and the motives that actuate the writers on them are as pure as the driven snow. But they are the mimetic gentilities of what may be called our upper middle literary class and they are not expressed in any living language. Indeed they tend to rob a language of any hope to live.

Not, of course, that English style is a mere matter of vocabulary or that the most rollicking use of the American vernacular in utter Shakespearean defiance of propriety would bring Shakespearean results. But distinguishable writing does after all derive from an immense catholicity and a freedom of choice, not only from among words that are read but from among words that are lived with. Nor can it possibly dispense with what the French call the "green" language—least of all in this country where the "green" language has

already acquired a vigor and variety that is not to be found in the books.

Take for example a passage from almost any serious article in an American magazine, say in regard to the reconstruction of American education after the war, for nobody had the slightest notion what he was writing about when he was writing on that subject, and there is never any idea in the article that might distract attention from the words.

"It can scarcely be denied that the vital needs of the hour call for something more than the disparate and unco-ordinated efforts which were unhappily often the mark of educational endeavor in the past. That looms large in the lesson of the war. If it has taught us nothing else the war has at least taught us the necessity of a synthetic direction of educational agencies toward a definite and realized goal, humanistic in the broad and permanent sense of the term, humanistic, that is to say, with due reference to the changing conditions of Society. The policy of drift must be abandoned once and for all and for it must be substituted a policy of steadfast, watchful—etc."

Not that I have seen this particular passage in an article on the reconstruction of education, but it might be found in any of them. It is exactly in the vein of all that I have happened to read; and in the best American magazines you will sometimes find four pages of eight hundred words apiece all made up of just such sentences.

Compare it for imaginative energy, ingenuity, humor, any literary quality you like, with the following selections from a recent volume on Americanisms and slang:

"See the elephant, crack up, make a kick, buck the tiger, jump on with both feet, go the whole hog, know the ropes, get solid, plank down, make the fur fly, put a bug in the ear, haloo, halloa, hello, and sometimes holler get the dead-wood on, die with your boots on, horn-swoggle, ker-flap, ker-splash, beat it, butt in, give a show-down, cut-up, kick-in, start-off, run-in, and jump off, put it over, put it across, don't be a high-brow, road-louse, sob-sister, lounge-lizard, rube, boob, kike, or has-been."

The style of this paragraph is by no means so good as would have resulted from a more careful selection, for the words are taken at random and most of them are stale. Moreover, the words are not nearly so imaginative or vigorous as seventeenth century terms, since forgotten by the mincing generations. The text, for example, is not for a moment to be compared with that of Sir Thomas Urquhart's "Rabelais." But even as it is, it is immeasurably better than my educational extract and it is just as pertinent to the subject of education—probably more so. The substitution of these lists for the usual university president's magazine contribution on educational reconstruction problems would have helped just as much, if not more, to the solution of the problems, besides

being pleasanter to read. Such lists might, I think, replace with advantage much of what is called "inspirational literature." "New Thought," for example, might have spared itself thousands upon thousands of its pages by simple repetition of these lists.

There were many barkeepers—in better days, of course—who, if they could have learned the literary language without losing grip on their own, might have made good writers. There are no professors of English literature who could learn to write the language even if you gave them all the advantages of barkeepers. They lack the barkeeper's fine, reckless imagination in the use of words. They cannot appropriate a word, or stretch it, or make it do something it had not done before, or still less create it out of nothing. They could not even interest themselves in the "green" language; their interest arises only when it is dry. Never, like a washwoman, or a poet, could they add to the capacities of human speech. Their lives are spent in reducing them. Language would never grow if ruled by the American upper middle literary class. It would stiffen and die. Our college chairs of English and our magazines for "cultured" persons probably do more to prevent the adequate use of our common speech than any other influences.

Distinguishable English sometimes may be

found in an American newspaper; it is never found in an American literary magazine. In some corner of a newspaper you may find a man writing with freedom and a sort of natural tact, choosing the words he really needs without regard to what is vulgar or what is polite. People are apt to read it aloud to you without knowing why; they like the sound of it. That never happens in a literary magazine. Nobody in a literary magazine fits words to thought; he fits his thoughts to a borrowed diction. Nobody in a literary magazine cares a hang about the right word for the expression of his thought but he is worried to death about diction. All the best contemporary literary essays are written in diction and there is no more telling the writers apart, so far as their style is concerned, than if they were all buried in equally good taste by the same undertaker.

Diction is the great funereal American literary substitute for style. Indeed that is what they mean when they praise an author's style. They do not mean that he has his own style of writing; they mean that he is *in the style* of writing.

Measured by the vitality of masterpieces, newspaper English is sometimes fairly good; literary magazine English is never good. Bad English is English about to die, such as you see in the magazines; the worst English is English that has never lived—it is the English of American belles-lettres.

That is one of the reasons why I hate the self-improved, traveled American whom I meet in books and periodicals. I hate him also for what seems to me the servility of his spirit in the presence of other people's past. I dare say it may be because I envy him his advantages. That is what the cultivated person always implies, and he wonders how any one, in view of the national crudity, can have the heart to find fault with these missionaries of taste from a riper culture who have learned the value of artistic *milieux* and literary backgrounds. After all, he says, what Henry James would call the "European scene" may still be commended to Americans, and surely it is just as well that they should be reminded now and then of what Professor Barrett Wendell used so admirably to term their "centuries of social inexperience." Nevertheless as he goes on I not only feel that I am coarse, but I like the feeling of it; and for the sake of other people of my own coarse type I will present here the excuses of vulgarity.

I have never been in Paterson, N. J., and I have never been in Venice, and so far as direct esthetic personal consequences to myself of golden hours of dalliance in the two places are concerned, I am therefore unable to offer a comparison. But during my life I have met many returned travelers from Venice and from Paterson and I have read

or listened to their narratives with as much attention as they could reasonably demand. Theoretically, I accept the opinion of enlightened persons that Venice is superior, in respect to what educators call its "cultural value," to Paterson. Practically, and judging merely from the effects upon the respective visitors, I am all for Paterson. I have never met a man who returned from Paterson talking like the stray pages of a catalogue, of which he had a complete copy before he started. Paterson never took away part of a man's mind and replaced it with a portion of an encyclopedia. Nobody ever came back from Paterson damaged as a man and yet inferior as a magazine article. For the careless person I should recommend Venice; for the culture-seeker, Paterson. Overstrain, that misery of the conscientious self-improving man, with its disagreeable effects upon other people, could be avoided in Paterson. Out of ten essays on Venice that I have read, nine were written by fish out of water who might have swum easily and perhaps with grace in the artistic currents of Paterson.

A self-improved American delivered an apologetic discourse the other day on the American deficiency in backgrounds. Culture cannot take root, he said; families float; everybody dies in a town he was not born in; art bombinates in a vacuum; literature gathers no moss; manners, when they

exist at all, are accidental; history is clean gone out of our heads, while every Englishman is familiar with Bannockburn; poetry cannot be written, and it is foolish to try, on account of the dearth of venerable circumstance; no traditions, no memories, no inheritance—in fact, no past at all; not even a present of any consequence, but only a future; and into this future every man, woman, and child in the whole foolish country is moving—though it is not through any fault of theirs for the unfortunate inhabitants really have no other place to go to.

I bear no grudge against the author of this discourse as an individual, but only as a type. Indeed, I am not sure that he is an individual or that I have reported him correctly, for no sooner does any one begin in this manner than his words run into the words of others, forming a river of sound, and I think not of one man, but of strings of them—all worrying about the lack of backgrounds, like the man who cast no shadow in the sun. I deny that it is any one's voluntary attitude; it is a lockstep that began before I was born, and I have no doubt it will continue indefinitely. Seven centuries after Columbus's injudicious discovery they will still be complaining, with a Baedeker in their hands, of the fatal youth of North America. For they live long, these people, because, as in certain lower orders of animal life, apparently,

there is hardly any life worth losing, and the family likeness they bear to one another is astonishing. The very ones that George William Curtis used to satirize as shining in society are still to be found among us at this moment, but they are engaged for the most part in contributing to the magazines. In one respect they seem more the slaves of other people's backgrounds even than Mrs. Potiphar was. Mrs. Potiphar only believed that the right sort of liveries were not produced in this country, whereas they swear that the right sort of literature can never be produced in this country—or at least not till our backgrounds are ever so many centuries thicker than they are now. I am unable, looking back, to see any value whatever in these decades of sheer sterile complaint of sterility, because no ruins can be seen against the sky, because no naiads are dreamed of in the Hudson or mermaids in Cape Cod Bay, and because most people who are born in Indianapolis seem glad to get away from it when they can.

For one sign that we have changed too fast I can produce two signs that we have not changed half fast enough. If there is no moss here on the walls of ancient battlements there is plenty of moss in our heads, and, so far as tenacity of tradition is concerned, I can produce a dozen United States Senators who are fully as picturesque, if only you will regard them internally,

as the quaintest peasant in the quaintest part of France. Backgrounds are not lost here just because we move about; backgrounds are simply worn inside, often with the ivy clustering on them. Who has not talked with some expatriated Boston man and found him as reposeful, as redolent of sad, forgotten, far-off things, as any distant prospect of Stoke-Pogis? In fact, it seems as if these pale expositors of backgrounds had merely visited the monuments they praise—*inside some Boston man*—and that, I confess, is the most irritating thing to me about them. They have never really looked at anything themselves, but only learned from others what they ought to seem to see. And it is absurd to tax us with a lack of memory, when in some of our most exclusive literary circles there is notoriously nothing but a memory to be seen. There is too much Stoke-Pogis in a Boston man, if anything, in proportion to other things. Even the casual foreign visitor has noticed it.

I have great respect for the religion of the Quakers, whose name, I understand, comes from the phrase of a founder about quaking and shaking in the fear of the Lord. And if that is the real reason why they quake I believe they are justified not only in their quaking, but in trying to make other people quake. But these Delsartean literary quakers correctly tremulous in the presence of antiquity, these "cultured" minds, not only

palsied by their own advantages, but intent on palsying others, bring back no good report to anybody in regard to the good things in the world.

I do not know whether a poet, like a sugar beet, requires a soil with peculiar properties; and, in regard to the poet, I do not know what the peculiar properties ought to be. Zoning of verse, comparative literary crop statistics, mean annual density of ideas, ratio of true poetry to square miles and population within a given period, are all outside my limitations. The theory that bone-dust fertilizers are the things for poets does not always seem to work, even when the bone-dust is that of the Crusaders, and I have read lyrics from cathedral towns which, though infinitely more decorous than the brass band of my native village, were equally remote from literature. Still there may be something in it. But I do know, even better than I wish I did, two generations of writers on the theme, who have been saying, with hardly any deviation in their phrases, that this is the land where poets cannot grow; and I know them for the sort of persons who, if by chance a poet should grow in defiance of their theory, could not tell him from a sugar beet. They are unaware of any growing thing which stands before them unaccompanied by bibliography. Unless there were antecedent books about an object they would not know that the object was a poet.

As the words culture and refinement have been applied and as they have been exemplified in American letters they have come to carry a curse for all save little bands of unpleasant and self-conscious persons who are themselves fidgetting about it. "Culture" is not absorbed, but packed in, always with a view to being taken out again without a wrinkle in it, and it does nothing to the man who gets it, but he means to do a lot with it to you. It is absurd to suppose that the human container of it takes any personal interest in his contents.

Of course I am not speaking of the essence of the thing, but only of the implications of the word as they have been seared into our social experience. I do not mean that humane learning blasts an American, but I do mean that among those who are known as cultured Americans learning is not humane. And I am not condemning the present moment. It has nothing to do with the rudeness of young people, jazz bands, the corruption of the English language, the cut of gowns down the back, war psychology, the Bolshevism of college professors, fox-trotting, the neglect of the classics, movies, commercialism, syndicalism, indecencies on the stage, popular novels, feminism, or any other of the unheard-of horrors that the middle-aged mind associates with the breakdown of civilization. There is no sign that Amer-

ican civilization is breaking down in this respect, for the simple reason that there is no sign that American civilization in this respect ever existed. There is no sign that among any considerable body of cultured Americans learning was ever humane, and it is lucky for us that vivacious men at every period of our national life have revolted from it. Ten years of Greek study would not have hurt Mark Twain, but ten years' contact with the sort of persons who studied Greek would have destroyed him. Historical studies would not have suffocated Walt Whitman; even after reading Bishop Stubbs he might have remained our poet of democracy. But association with modern historians would have done for him. Had Walt Whitman taken the same course that I did at a school of political science, he would have gone mad or become a college president.

What was it that so pinched the mind of Henry Adams, readers of the *Education of Henry Adams* are always asking, though one would think the answer could not be missed. It was Boston and Cambridge in the eighteen-fifties and an acute personal consciousness of membership in the Adams family. It was a lucky thing for both Jews and Christians that Moses was not a cultured Boston man, for the Ten Commandments would not only have been multiplied by fifty, but a supplemental volume of thousands of really

indispensable gentilities would have come out every year. No man knew better than the late W. D. Howells the Sinaitic rigor of the social scruple when the descendant of the Puritans once turned his conscience away from God and bent it upon culture. The genial tale of *The Lady of the Aroostook* might well have been a tragedy. Indeed, the passion of a man bred in the right Boston set and immensely conscious of it—a man who read the right books in the right way, knew the right people, visited the right places abroad—the passion of such a man for a girl who not only said "I want to know," but who had never heard of a chaperon—there is a situation not only tragic in itself, but close to the edge of violence, terminable, one would say, only by accidental death, murder, or suicide. Desdemona was smothered for less. That Mr. Howells should see it to a comparatively cheerful end without calling down the lightning proves merely the magic of his hand. But Mr. Howells did not conceal one painful consequence. Hero and heroine both were outcasts from culture for evermore. Never again did they enter the doors of the right people of Cambridge. "He's done the wisest thing he could by taking her out to California. She never would have gone down here." This was the doom that culture pronounced in the final chapter. For, although at nineteen years of age Lydia ceased

to say she wanted to know, the early stain remained. She bore it to the grave. And this ending was entirely just and Mr. Howells did not exaggerate in the slightest degree the rigors of the law, for, though Lydia as he made her was the most natural and adorable creature imaginable, he was right in saying that in the cultured circles of the time and place she would not have gone down.

The taboo of culture is of course no new thing, but dates from a comparatively ancient grudge in our brief literary history. People are ashamed of their culture nowadays, a friend of mine was saying, and he went on to cite instances of the exclusion from human intercourse of all those matters of general interest which make intercourse human. And why are you so afraid of general ideas? one visiting Frenchman after another has asked me, and I have never yet been able to think of a suitable reply. And they go back to France on no better terms with the English language than when they came. It is impossible to arouse any enthusiasm for our spoken language in a Frenchman, for he does not believe that conversation in his sense of the word is ever carried on in it. And he is certainly right. The range of a quite ordinary Frenchman's every-day talk is not generally permitted in this country. Religion may be discussed with a French chauffeur on a footing

of naturalness absolutely out of place at an American authors' club. You may confess a literary taste to a French washwoman, but not to a New York banker. The philosophic speculations of French barber shops would be shockingly pedantic at our dinner tables.

Of course the main reason why the conversation of a novelist does not differ from that of a shoe manufacturer is simply because as a rule there is no real difference between them. But there is sometimes another side to it. The man of letters who excludes letters from his talk is not necessarily ashamed of them. But he knows the traditional association in this country of culture with ennui, and he knows that it is amply justified. Acquaintance with the personalities of cultured groups naturally disposes a sensitive mind to the cultivation of an appearance of illiteracy. Thought is not a social nuisance in this country, but thinkers generally are. Hence, when seized by an irresistible impulse to express any sort of an idea, a well-bred man will always leave the room, just as he would do if seized by an uncontrollable fit of coughing.

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